

THE MESS DECK

W. F. SHANNON



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THE MESS DECK

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BY

W. F. SHANNON



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THE CAP'N'S COX'N

THE CAP'N'S COX'N

“Macgrigor Anstruther Cahoun, A.B.,
Was as cool a card of the Queen's Navee
As ever roused the Hard, Portsea,
Or painted Point.

But his soul was among the damned, we hear,
'Cos he took up rum and struck down beer,
And frequent threw his inner gear
All out of joint.

“But Cox'n Macgrigor Cahoun, V.C.—”

“THERE'S no doubt he's a very diff'rent chara'ter,” observed my friend Chatty Mather, A.B. “But we don't want to sit in this fog and hear about it. There's nineteen verses to that hymn.”

So we went out. We had been to a sing-song in a “rough” house in Portsea, and it was getting towards that time in the evening when hilarious spirits insist on using the table as a platform and

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make grave attempts to dance hornpipes on the mantelshelf.

"But what's the song all about?" I asked, as we walked up Queen Street.

"Didn't I never tell ye about that? No? It starts here, too. This yer Macgrigor Cahoun was in the *Dooke*, layin' in the stream, when Cap'n Billy Bunson hoisted his pennant on her. Fust gen'ral leave after Sam—which was the tally Cahoun sailed under in that ship—didn't get back when he ought. He was adrift forty-nine and a half hours, and then he arrove aboard in a waterman's boat, wid one boot on, no cap, and a general' tore appearance. He limbered up afore the skipper the followin' Thursday, a' course.

"'What's this?' says the Cap'n. 'Broke your leave by over forty-eight hours? How's that?'

"'Missed me train, sir,' says Sam.

"'What hole of a place was you in then, where they on'y runs one train in two days?'

"'London, sir.'

"'Master-at-Arms, how many trains from London in a day?' said the Cap'n, turnin' to the johndy.¹

"The johndy looks 'em up. 'Nearly forty, sir.'

"'Did you miss all the eighty, my man?'

¹ Johndy—gendy—gendarme.

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“‘On’y jist, sir. Hardly to be called a miss it wasn’t. A sort of a nouter, sir, I should call it.’

“‘Indeed! Scale and pay, fourteen days 10 A, and stop his leave for a month, Master-at-Arms.’

“‘Very good, sir,’ says the johndy. ‘But he’s already habitual leave, sir.’ [Only going ashore once in three months.]

“Cap’n Bunson hung on a minit as the beadle—which is the same as a johndy—spoke, and Sam took the opportunity to say he’d rather have cells than 10 A.

“The Cap’n looked him up and down for a minit or two. ‘Well, my man,’ he says, ‘we don’t know each other very well yet, but I think we shall. Of all the d——d impudent scoundrels I ever met wid, you’re the d——dest. You come aboard in a filthy condition after a drinking turn-out, and tell lies about missin’ trains’—(‘On’y jist, sir,’ whispers Sam)—‘and now you ast a favour! You want to *choose* your punishment, eh? Why, damme, if you told the truth I wouldn’t give ye any at all. All you men lie and say you miss trains, and none of you think of sendin’ a chit off explainin’ that you’re dead drunk and can’t come.’

“‘No, sir. Never struck me as any good, sir,’ says Sam.

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“ ‘ Exactly. And yet you all know that I know what’s the matter.’

“ ‘ Yes, sir.’

“ ‘ Try to tell the truth for the future, then. And as you want cells, do seven days of ’em in addition to the 10 A.’

“ Sam done his cells, mediatin’ deep all the time, and then done his 10 A mournful. It’s very wearin’ is 10 A, while cells is quiet and peaceful. In 10 A, when it’s your watch below, you clean brass or paint-work, or holystone decks, or take a rest for two or three hours on the quarter-deck, standin’ at attention facin’ the paint-work, and two yards from anythink to lean aginst. You eat under the sentry’s eye (and eat rapid too, because your time’s short) sittin’ on the cable-deck, which is the windiest place in the ship. It’s a fair torture of a punishment, although it don’t sound hard in Parliament, where they asts about it sometimes. Your grog’s stopped in both punishments, and you musn’t smoke, a’ course.

“ When Sam next got leave he done the usual—broke it. Instid of him, a telegraph come to the Cap’n. That mornin’ the Cap’n was the most ferocious on the defaulters I ever seen him. He give ’em all the maxi’um punishment. He yapped at the officers : he said there was court-martials still to be

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had : he swore he'd have a hangin' at the yardarm ; or, as there wasn't any on some ships, he'd put up wid a david.

"We was all in the dark, a' course, about what had upset him. We thought his noolaid at breakfast was on'y warranteds or cookers, and a little thing like that is quite enough to throw a post-cap'n out o' gear, I can tell ye. But when Sam arrove, we heard diff'rent.

"Sam was put in irons at once, and piled down below before he knoo where he was. He looked very hurt at the johndy, and ast him why he give him this sort of thing, so diff'rent to his usual welcome. Where was them smiles he knoo so well ? he ast, and the johndy told him it wasn't no smilin' turnout this time. 'It's mut'ny and court-martials,' he says.

"'Ah, well,' says Sam, as they was shuttin' the cell door, 'we can't all be bloomin' well spotless. My pore head ! Sleep, gentle sleep. Rock me——'

* * * * *

"'Did you send this ?' said the Cap'n, when he was brought before him. The Cap'n was tappin' a telegraph, and looking dark as—as—the double-bottom.

"'I certainly sent one, sir,' says Sam, and quite sober he was by this time, I can assure ye.

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“‘Read it,’ says the Cap’n. ‘Is that it?’

“‘The readin’ on it was ‘Blind drunk, won’t come. Yours respectful, M. A. Cahoun.’

“‘Yes, sir, that’s it,’ says Sam. ‘I guv it to the landlord of the *Dog and Duck* to send when my leaf was up, if I was too drunk to send it myself. But it’s true, sir, it’s quite true. I can bring witnesses to prove it.’

“The Cap’n nearly choked hisself. He couldn’t get out sufficient words at once. Might he be perished if ever he met such infernal cheek, he said. Any fool would know it was true. ‘Take him away. I’ll apply for a court-martial.’

“Now all this time Sam had been puttin’ on the injured-innocent look, and he’d got it set.

“‘But, sir,’ he lammed off, ‘you *told* me to do it. You said, tell the truth and shame the devil and I’ll let you off the next time. And now I’ve done it, see what I git? That’s trustfulness, that is!’ And he pretended to turn to go below with the johndy.

“A sort of recollection seemed to come over Cap’n Bunson. His for’id begun to unwrinkle from the up and down strokes and started to wrinkle the other way for a smile. But he smoothed his face.

“‘Come here, Cahoun,’ he called. ‘Are you a Scotchman?’

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“ ‘On’y a Stamshaw Scotchman, sir.’

“ ‘Oh, on’y a Stamshaw Scotchman? And what’s that?’

“ ‘Father, Scotch. Mother, Cockney. Meself born in Stamshaw, sir.’

“ ‘I see. Well, Cahoun, you do honour to your country.’

“ ‘Which one, sir?’ said Sam.

“ ‘The country of mefastitiscs,’ he says, meanin’ Scotland. ‘You’ll overreach yourself one day, my man. I remember the occasion. I was skarcastic, and you think it’s fine fun to carry on the joke, do ye? A seaman must learn that a officer can turn his jest to earnest very sharp.’

“ ‘I wish you’d do it now, sir,’ says Sam, smart as anythink.

“The Cap’n frowned agin. He didn’t quite see the point. He had to think it out to hisself. ‘I promised to let him off, in fun. He takes it in earnest. I take his earnest in earnest and start out to run him in for a court-martial, but he says he wishes I would turn my joke to earnest, ’cos then I must let him off. I believe the devil’s cornered me.’

“Sam said he surmised all this argument was goin’ on in the Cap’n’s mind, and when he jist said, ‘Remanded,’ he knoo he was safe.

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"The Cap'n sent for him next day to his cabin.

" 'Cahoun,' he said, 'I've decided to be in earnest.'

" 'Thank ye, sir.'

" 'I've put you in my boat's crew.'

"Sam was took aback, flat aback. He'd never been petted before.

" 'But I'm habitual leave, and a thorough bad chara'ter, sir.'

" 'You have been. But I'll give you a clean sheet, Cahoun. You start afresh.'

" 'I—my—excuse me, sir, my eyes is weak,' and Sam drewed his sleeve acrost his face.

"The Cap'n was lookin' through Sam all this time he was tryin' not to leak. When he seen he was a bit manly agin', 'Shake hands, my man,' he says, and they shook hearty.

" 'For the future, sir——'

" 'No promises, Cahoun,' puts in the Cap'n. 'I won't have it. You are in my boat. Don't disgrace me.'

"That was Cap'n Bunson's way.

"When his cox'n was promoted to a higher ratin', Sam Cahoun took the billet, and so there you are. Now you know Sam, and will be able to understand that for Cap'n Bunson he'd go through brimstone and

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treacle, to put it mild, and I put it mild, as you p'r'aps don't care for hell and blazes?"

"Ssh," I said, "certainly not."

"I thought not. Well, now we comes to Egypt, and the desert, and the fight in the night. You know the Naval Brigade was there, a' course. Cap'n Bunson was there wid it, and Sam, who follered him like a shadder in every scrap, which was right. As Sam said, 'S'pose the Cap'n captures the enemy in bunches like Nelson used to do, I must be there to stack up the captured swordses and spearses, while he politely bows to the niggers.'

"But in this night fight the Cap'n got lost somehow. You remember we was drove back, formed up, broke again, reformed, each man plyin' his gun or his cutlass wid all his might to keep his own life. It was the most tremenjus burnin' fiery furnace I've ever bin in. You couldn't see in the least what you was a doin' of. I seemed to hear, dreamy, between the hard work of cuttin' and thrustin', Sam moanin' that he'd lost the Cap'n, and astin' everybody if they'd seen him. And they all said 'No!' emphatic, and went on fightin', thinkin' he was wid some other company.

"'What did he want to slope off by hisself for, tryin' to sneak all the glory,' I heard Sam sayin'.

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‘Nelson always uster stick by his cox’n and share it. Well, so long, Chatty, I seen him last over this way. Out the way, *you!*’ And, still in a dream, I seen him down one or two Noobians and pass into the thick of the fight.

“Then I surmised he’d bin speakin’ to me.

“But the rest of us was pushed back and back, sweatin’ and baked. Sometimes I heard, and yet did not hear, husky voices screamin’, ‘Stick to it, Navy!’ or Number One thunderin’, ‘Steady on the right, men!’ or the pipin’ of the sub-lutenant, ‘Off-sides there!’ as a Dervish speared his way through the line and he pipped him wid his revolver.

“And as for me, I was gettin’ tireded and tireded. The whole earth was full of mad black men, and they was all waitin’ their turn at me. Something ’ud loom up like a figure in a fog, big and sudden. There’d be a little private fight, and one of us was down bitin’ at the sand, or clutchin’ at the air, or beatin’ a tattoo, or just simply still. And the sound in your ears was maddenin’, so that the eyes seemed useless. Three-and-forty times I lunged and parried, and three-and-forty niggers made earth, and still they popped up. And I was diggin’ lazily away at ’em wid my bayonet, downin’ of ’em, when I woke up in a field hospital tent, and Sam was holding my hand.

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“‘I found him,’ he says, after a bit.

“‘Who?’ says I.

“‘Cap’n.’

“‘Didn’t know he was lost,’ I says, and went to sleep again.

* * * * *

“When I was gettin’ well I heard all about it.

“It seems the Cap’n had got separated in the rush, wid between four and five bluejackets——”

“*Between* four and five, Chatty?” I asked.

“Did I say between? That’s how it was telt me. I surmise there was a budding A.B. amongst ’em then, an O.D., but I don’t know for certain. They was surrounded by a howlin’ mob, and no doubt fought away blind like I did. But one went down, and another went down, and on’y Cap’n Bunson and one bluejacket was left, back to back, when Sam Cahoun came boundin’ into the circus, yellin’ out ‘Stamshaw for ever!’ which he’d made a kind a war-cry; and ‘Wayo Wuz-Fuz!’ and sich things. The other pore feller was speared at that minit by a big buck nigger, but Sam was on the spearsman at the same instant and spread him out so that he never spoke no more.

“Then he stood by the Cap’n and they fought silent, except when Sam used his navy revolver or his

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sea-service cutlass wid effect. Then he'd remark loud enough for the Cap'n to hear, 'Brass buttons retired hurt, sir,' referrin' to a chap who wore a coat but no trousies, who was partic'larly active. The brass buttons jist shone up in the starlight, ye understand. 'Chap wid a white shirt sicked off, sir.' The Cap'n answered nix, but fought grim. He was breathin' hard, too. At last the crowd seemed to melt away, and they two thought they was safe, when another mob in full retreat rolled along, and pore Cap'n Bunson fell wid a shovel-headed spear in his chest.

"The battle was ended, the enemy was gone home, and the British Army camped where it stood. Search parties went out lookin' for the wounded, but the battle had been scattered, and no ambulance came near Samuel, where he stood by the Cap'n. So at last he hoisted him up, and staggered wid him towards the nearest camp-fire, far away.

"'Halt! Who goes there?' sang out a sentry at last.

"'Me,' said Sam, 'a blighted matlow [*matelot*], which is French for flatfoot.'

"'French, eh?' snapped the sentry, one of the Black Watch he was. 'Say what yer doin' here, quick, or I fire.' And he held his musket in a shootin' attitude.

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"Me dear McPherson, you see before ye a cox'n, a cap'n's cox'n of the Royal Navy, wearin' round his neck his superior officer, bashed about a bit.'

"'Advance, cap'n's cox'n of the Royal Navy, wid the superior officer bashed about a bit, and give the countersign.'

"'Look here, McPherson——'

"'My name's not McPherson.'

"'Eh, mon, I know it ain't. I took ye for a parsnip, and tried to butter ye. Your native heath's in the Mile End Road. But we'll argue this out to-morrow, cully. What I started out to observe was, that if you repeat all I say, and ast for countersigns and all that, we shall never git to the doctor. Call the sergeant of the guard, for God's sake. Oh, here he comes. Sergeant, kindly tell off a couple of hands to help carry Cap'n Bunson here, wounded and un-sensible. Your man Smith is all for the articles of war and shootin' at sight.'

"Smith! his name's Macfarlane.'

"'Oh, is it? Well, good-night, Privit Mac—farlane. Now, Sergeant dear, show us the Naval Brigade, and we'll do the rest.'

"So the sergeant told off some men to carry the Cap'n, but in half-a-dozen paces Sam himself tumbled down and wanted carryin'. He'd got several gashes

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and was a bit weak. The fust thing he said when he come to was to ast if they'd brought in the other bluejackets what was wid the Cap'n. They had not, for they was all dead.

* * * * *

"The Cap'n got about before I did. My wounds was not any of 'em dangerous, but they was in great plenty. I got thirteen hurt certificates. 'Just your luck,' says Sam, 'I go in the same battle and on'y git four! Look at the honour you've got!'

" 'Well, you should 'a stood by me,' I said, 'then you could 'a shared it, for all I care. I ain't a Cap'n though, I ain't.'

" 'Now, Chatty,' he says, 'you're a-wanderin'. Wound Number 12 ain't quite healed. Go to sleep.'

* * * * *

"The Cap'n made full enquiries about Sam's evolutions on the battlefield. He offered to git him promoted to a warrant's billet. But Sam wouldn't take a warrant at any price. He said he wasn't goin' to be no salt beef squire; it was bad enough to look after cap'ns, let alone gunners' and boatswain's stores. His head wasn't good enough for any keepin' of accounts, he said: and he was goin' to be Cap'n's cox'n and nothink else, except Adm'al's cox'n later on, when Cap'n Bunson got his hoist to the flag rank.

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“The Cap'n argued the point, but Sam could always beat him at that.

“So the Cap'n give in. But he had forwarded an account of it all, and a strong recommend for the Cross. And he got it too, did Cahoun, and the Queen herself pinned it on.

“For once in a way Sam lost his bearin's. The Queen held out her hand for him to kiss, and Sam up and shakes it hearty. She laughed, and so did the Prince, and all of 'em. Sam seen the point then, and when the Prince stepped forward holdin' out his hand, Sam dropped on his knee and went to kiss it. But the Prince wouldn't have it, and they shook like old friends, and all the Court crowded round in the next room to shake wid the tall sailor, wid 'For Valour' on his chest, and ast him how he done it. And he said he didn't know, he supposed he was excited at the time.

“And now the Cap'n's a Full Adm'al, and Sam is Adm'al's cox'n, and his beard torpedo-rig—which is pointed—and all goldy coloured; the finest made cox'n in the Navy, and that is as much as to say the whole world.

“And when lady visitors sees him a sittin' in the starn-sheets of the Adm'al's barge, wearin' the little iron Maltese Cross, they says, 'The Victoria Cross!

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Dear me, how did you get that, my good man ?' And he answers, 'It's all a mistake, mum. I was a wanderin' round wantin' a scrap, and I come up like the p'liceman towards the end of one, and took all the glory. The other bluejackets, mum, what was there before me, happened to lose the number of their mess, and the Queen don't give her medals to dead men.'

"Do you mean the poor fellows were killed ?' says the lady, shrinkin' wid horror at the way he says it.

"Yes, mum. But we expect that sort of thing in a fightin' Navy. If Death comes, we say let him come sharp and short. No maimin' and blindin', but a fair downer in action. That's sea divinity, mum. We ain't tender and we ain't treated tender.'

"How dreadful !' says the lady, and then she asts the Adm'al if all his men are sich brutes as his cox'n, and the Adm'al laughs, and says he hopes so."

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And may there be no moaning at the bar.

TENNYSON AND OTHERS.

“THERE’S on’y two things I like better’n the mighty ocean and salt provisions,” observed a bluejacket, sitting moodily in his mess.

“And what’s them, Simon?” asked a friend, indifferently.

“The bewchus land and fresh ones!”

“I shouldn’ speak them round numbers, Sim, not without a licence. Swear if you want to. What is it?”

“More experimentalisation, that’s what it is.”

“And a very comforting thing, too, by the sound of it. Do it mean anything?”

“It means that the Cap’n’s doin’ more stakistics. I just bin to the canteen for suthin’ tasty, and the best they can do for me is preserved brick-dust and consolidated tooth-brushes.”

“Now I can understand this droppin’ into poetry,

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Simon, and I should like to know a blessed long word myself."

'I should think you would! Vividsectioners ought to be boiled, especially when they're cap'ns, vividsectionin' unoffensive matlows" (matelots).

So the whole of the lower deck thought, too. Once before Captain Newsted had let the canteen run out, to try the effect of "bare navy" (régulation diet) on the men's health, and they were afraid he was going to verify his former calculations now, and implored Jimmy Twelves, the ship's comedian, to remonstrate with him.

"Not me," said Jimmy. "You know what I got last time, don't ye? Two hours facin' the paint-work, for impudence. Let someone else have a try—someone solemn."

"You was too blunt-topped over it, Jim," urged a delegate. "Approach the subject gentle."

"Yes, that's the sensitive paragraft," said Twelves meditatively: and then decisively, "Brother sufferers, sling awf! Allow me and Simon to switch on our thoughtfulnesses."

Soon afterwards Jimmy appeared on the quarter-deck with a fathom of rope in one hand and the slack of his trousers in the other, and requested to see the Captain.

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"Yes, my man?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but would you have any objections to me wearin' this bit of two-inch?" and he held forth the rope.

"Where? How? What for, Twelves?"

"On'y to keep me pants up, sir."

"Why do they require lashing?"

"Well, sir, the fact of it is, I'm fadin' away"—Jimmy was still fairly rotund—"and they won't keep up on their own volition."

"You must put a sheepshank in your waistband, then," said the Captain, faintly smiling.

"Sir, I doos that two or three times each watch. But, thinks I, in these hurricane latitoods it might require doin' at a crikital moment, and then where would I be? Now with a rope's end I could take in a reef instanteous."

"You'd better see the doctor," said the Captain, turning away.

"Beg pardon, sir, but this is one of them cases when the physician would say, 'I can do nothink for you, my man, till you're built up.' To speak in diagrams, sir, 'Bare navy' is at the bottom of it."

Captain Newsted frowned. "Well, don't speak in diagrams. Let me know exactly what you want."

"I wanted to say, sir, that plain food is playin' the

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very devil with my constitootion, and that there's nothink but sherbert and sandpaper in the canteen."

"You are much too ingenious, Twelves. The canteen shall be renewed as soon as possible. Meanwhile be moderate with the sandpaper."

"Yes, sir, I will. It is a bit wearin' on the internals."

* * * * *

H.M. eighth-class cruiser *Turtle* kept order in a section of the South Seas. She had now been many weeks away from mail stations and the telegraph, and was steaming to resume touch. But the day after Jimmy's delicate hint she spoke H.M.S. *Tortoise*, altered course, and steamed away in her company at full speed.

"More exigencies, I bet," moaned Twelves.

"These blightin' exes never takes us anywheres near a bumboat woman, I observe," said a neighbour.

"No fear," said Jimmy. "They was specially invented by Eevan in London to take us to uninhabited islands or the open sea."

The gloom of the mess-deck was somewhat lightened by the joyful news, "War with Germany." There was a qualifying phrase that it "might break out at any moment" when the rumour left the

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wardroom; but this did not follow the definite statement to the lower deck.

It took three days of hard steaming to reach the Seashell Islands, about whose possession war was imminent; and the ship's companies were drilled incessantly on the way. Twelves was number three at a six-inch gun, and as he manipulated the hundred-pound shot he pathetically observed that without a bit of ham or a pot of lobster for a "stand-easy," it was impossible to take an intelligent interest in gunnery. "Jist fancy puttin' the shot on solid food and no luxuries! Why, they wouldn't think of doin' that at the Army and Navy Sports! Now give me a boiled 'addick touched up wid butter, and tea wid milk——"

"Silence at that gun!" roared the First Lieutenant.

When at last in sight of the only anchorage of the Seashells, an open roadstead, the ships cleared for action and steamed slowly in, with colours flying, closely watching two anchored German warships beating to quarters in imitation of the English.

"There's a good ten minutes yet before we get the range," said the captain of the six-inch.

"Yes, and we ain't had no supper yet," said Twelves. "That's like the Cap'n; he takes no thought of hungriness. Now, if Nelson was sailin'

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into action he'd be calm, and not forgit important things. He'd look to his watch, and say: 'Ah! I see there's three good minits afore the row starts, so we'll pipe the men to dinner.' That was his way—always let his men have a 'arty meal, so they could fight comfortable."

"Not much time in three minutes, Jimmy, not for a dinner, is there?" said one.

"There's a calamitous sight more in fifteen for a supper! If the Cap'n gets excited over sinkin' two cruisers like them, made in Germany, he'll never be fit for the Mediterranean command. S'pose I'm hit, where am I for my supper? In the sick-bay on low diet, or in the ditch on no diet at all. It's thoughtless of him."

Conversation ceased as the ships drew within range. Each gun-captain trained his weapon on what he considered the "softest" spot of the opposing vessel, ready, at the first hint of war, to fire. The English captains were, of course, ignorant as to whether terms had been arranged or whether they were expected to fight. The Germans stood to their guns, but gave no sign, so the English ships anchored abreast of them.

"Well," whispered Jimmy, after an interval, "I bin holdin' me breath for half-an-hour, expectin'

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things, and now I don't mind tellin' ye I reshume my usual easy breathin'."

"You needn't breathe on me, though, Jim," said his opposite number.

"And you can hand over that half-a-dollar, Bill," Twelves went on, to the captain of the gun, "because you won't hit her smoke-stack. You won't git the blossom in' chance. Another half-dollar on it there's Peace flappin' his wings over us."

"You're mistook, Jimmy," said the prosaic gun-captain. "That's thunder. There's a storm comin' up."

Further argument was stopped by the wail of the boatswain's pipe, and "Away, steam-pinnace's crew!"

Twelves, who was bowman of the pinnace, darted off to take his place, and the acute tension on the warships snapped as Captain Newstead steamed ashore. The wind blew in gusts as the boat passed into the shallow bight which served as anchorage for small vessels, and its strength increased during the hour the Captain spent with the Consul.

"What's it all about, Jimmy?" asked the coxswain, as the boat uneasily swayed at the landing-stage. "Snakes, ain't it?"

"*Snakes*, Malachi? You've bin drinkin.' These are the delirious tremblings comin' on. Snakes!"

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"Well, you needn't fall out of the boat, Jim. I'm statin' solemn facts. These traders collect cobras, for I heard the Navigator say so. And cobras is snakes."

"Copra, Malachi, copra. Excuse me smilin' so rude."

"And what's copra?"

"I really don't know whether it's cocoa-nut mattin' or kyair brooms, but it's something that grows on trees, and they tames the natives to shin up and git it, and stands by with a gun against tiredness. The German and English traders divided out the trees and natives in this island and kicked up a noise over the odd one. But here comes the Cap'n almost weepin', so I reckon them coruscatin' consuls have tossed for it, and we're dished out of our target-practice."

The Captain stepped into the pinnace, which at once shoved off. But he had delayed too long, and after a struggle the gale beat the boat back, and broke her upon the beach. The crew escaped unhurt, to see the four vessels in the outer roads presently slip their cables and make for the open sea. Three drew slowly from the land, but the fourth made no headway.

"The big German's bein' drove back, I think, sir," said the coxswain after a while.

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"Yes, I'm afraid so," answered Captain Newstead, anxiously watching. And although her funnels flamed high, and she struggled determinedly, her engines were worsted by the storm, and as darkness shut down she struck a sandbank. There all night she lay, almost on an even keel, buffeted unceasingly by the sea.

At dawn Captain Newstead and his men went to windward and tried to float a line to her, but a cross-current spoilt the attempt. She was dismasted and funnelless, and her boats were gone; and as the hurricane abated nothing the English Captain gave her up as doomed.

But Twelves drew aside the coxswain. "Malachi," said he, "should you think a German warship would carry German sausages?"

"No, Jimmy, I shouldn't," replied the coxswain, emphatically. "It's my firm belief that German sausages is one of the few things made in England."

The look of expectancy and hope faded from Twelves' face. But brightening, he said wistfully, "Still, they'd have *something* tasty aboard, wouldn't they?"

"Jim, you're mad," answered Malachi. "What for are ye talkin' like that?"

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"I'm starved, and that's why. If I was sure that wreck had a good canteen I'd pay her a visit."

"Not till this hurricane stops, I bet."

"You're wrong, Malachi. I've waited a heluva time for the bumboat woman, and this Consul don't understand the feeding arrangements of bluejackets so I shall go now. Jist git the line ready, will ye, whilst I strip off me jumper? And, if the County Council don't object," he added grimly, "I'll dock me trahsies, too."

The coxswain remonstrated, to no purpose, and then prepared the line, while Twelves stripped.

"Yes, it is a bit parky, sir, in this wind," said he in answer to the Captain, as the rope was being made fast under his arm-pits. "It'll be warm in the water, though."

"Good-bye, Twelves," said the Captain, shaking his hand. "Make for her quarter. I'll pay out the line."

"Very good, sir. Thank ye." And the bluejacket plunged into the surf. Tossed helplessly, he yet worked his way gradually and obliquely across the current, and at last doubled the stern of the wreck and was helped on board over her lee gangway.

"Jist fetched—a line—for ye—sir," he panted to the German Captain, who gave him in charge of a

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lieutenant, after heartily thanking him in a mixture of French and English. The officer led him to the ward-room, and while a hawser was being hauled ashore he was rubbed down, dosed with brandy, and clothed in a suit of the lieutenant's uniform.

"Excuse me, sir," said Jimmy, when his dressing was completed, "but have you got anything tasty, aboard—any delicatessen, so to speak?" And he made signs of extreme hunger.

The officer was greatly concerned, and as he went on deck ordered the steward to give the visitor the run of the ward-room pantry. Although such licence had been beyond Jim's wildest dreams, he showed no outward emotion nor any embarrassment in his choice. He took ham, sardines, salmon and potted tongue for a start, and tried them mixed.

"You make not often to get those?" queried the astonished steward.

"What! You speak English, too, Dusty? No, not lately. Canteen's run dry. Nothing in it. Savvy?"

"Yes, yes, of course."

"So you can imagine my feelinks to be let loose in the caboose like this, and I hope you'll excuse my holdin' capacity. Necessity is the mother of plain food, but luxuries is the real staff of life, ain't they? Got any sentences like that in your language, eh?"

THE MESS DECK

"Oh yes," said the bewildered German.

"That's all right, then. And now with another dip in at the lager I'm done. This beer's very weak, though. I shall have to take it two times, I'm afraid. I say, Dusty, do you think the Cap'n 'ud mind if I took a pot or two of salmon ashore? It 'ud be a pity to leave it here. The ship is sure to break up soon."

"You can to take all that the which you have want," answered the steward.

"Hand us over a bit of spunyarn then, old flick, for a start."

The man did so, and went on deck. He was getting anxious, seeing the leisurely way Jim was taking things, lest he should be forgotten. A hawser now connected the ship and shore, and most of the German sailors had been drawn to land. When the last one or two were ready Twelves was sent for. He came on deck in his borrowed uniform, with a brilliant bandolier of tinned and potted foods slung over his shoulder. In his left hand he held a massive ham.

The Captain and officers laughed, but Jim imperturbably bowed and "hoped they didn't mind a man trying to keep the wolves from his messmates' doors." He was asked to take his place in the life-

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buoy, but glancing at the group of officers he drew back and waved his ham gracefully. "Officers first, sir," said he to the Captain.

No argument would move him. "No, sir," he said, gravely, and in a tone of finality, "I took a solemn oath that I'd see everyone safe before I left this ship. 'Don't disgrace me, Jimmy,' says the Cap'n, *my* Cap'n. And I says, 'Fear not,' like they talk in books, 'Fear not; I'll fight the whole ship's company, if necessary.' So these young gen'lmen must disembark previous to J. Twelves, acting lieutenant." And he sat down magnificently on one of the remaining hatch-combings, till a wave sluiced him off.

It was no time to argue with a round, armour-belted bluejacket, so the junior officers were sent ashore. When his first lieutenant and himself alone remained, the Captain insisted on Twelves going next.

"Very well, sir," at last said Jimmy, "but y'know if the Adm'alty hear of this I shall be kicked out of the Service for not upholdin' the honour of the British flag."

Still wearing his array of "tasty bits," clinging to his ham, and holding a tin-opener in his teeth, he was drawn ashore, half-drowned on the passage.

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As soon as he recovered breath he said to his Captain, who was amusedly observing him. "It's all right, sir, I haven't deserted. I ain't *really* a German lootenant. I'm on'y disguised, because I thought there might be some Crusaders about who observed me with the naked eye when I went away in Purity, and might be waitin' for me with a p'lice-man. Them Germans blushed a bit for me, sir, but they was very social, and fed me up after fitting these slops on to me. These tins and gadgets is presents, sir, and this ham. Seein' my weak condition, they said on board, 'Dear me, they don't look after your nourishment much in the English Navy. Come here and help yourself, old tuppenny starver.' So I done it, and if you'd care for a tin, or a cut awf this ham, sir, which I can recommend, you're welcome."

"Thank you, Twelves, not just now."

"Of course I told 'em, sir, confidential, that they mustn't take us *Turtles* for specimens of British bluejackets, because owin' to circumstances over which we had no control (delicately hintin' at them, y'see, sir), our canteen was empty, and so was we."

The Captain turned away to hide a smile, and welcomed the German commander as he was hauled up the beach.

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"I thought I'd have a tap wid him," said Jimmy to his friends as they used the tin-opener shortly after, under the lee of a rock. "He ain't got no appetite hisself, but he ought to be more considerative to them that have, like me. Why, I'm *all* appetite, and I'd rather be that friar with the ward-room pie and grey orders, whatever they is, than any other man in the hist'ry books."

"I believe ye, Jimmy," said the coxswain as well as he was able through a large piece of ham. "But you look all right in them clo'es, Jim. I should hang on to the lieutenant billet if I was you."

"Not me. Why, a German lieutenant's pay ain't much more'n mine. No; I tell ye what: the job I should really care for would be to take charge of one of them ham and beef shops next door to a public! There you are," continued he, glowing with enthusiasm, "there you are! Earth ain't got no more to awffer, and I doubt if Heaven have."

"Jim, you've called up visions of beer now, talkin' like that," said the coxswain, reproachfully.

"Let's stroll round and lap up some palm oil or cocoanut wine, then, or whatever else the native licensed vituallers keeps," said Twelves.

So they did.

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THE MESS DECK

The three ships returned to the roadstead when the storm subsided, and the pinnacle's crew were soon aboard their vessel, involved in routine and forgetful of storm and wreck.

But months afterwards a letter came from the Admiralty to the Captain, enclosing an autograph note from the German Emperor to James Twelves, A.B., official number 1,054,261, thanking him for saving the officers and ship's company of the *Hamburg*, and bestowing upon him every good wish and the Order of the Double-Headed Eagle.

"And a very good metal, too," said Jimmy, looking at it in his mess. "Better drawn than the Human Society's that come last mail, ain't it?"

"You'll want to expand your chest, Jim, if many more of these drops in," said the pinnacle's coxswain, examining it.

"Yes; but I wish I could git something really valuable from the turn-out, besides on'y coverin' myself with metals."

Twelves meditated for a space, and then borrowed an antique pen and some notepaper. In the fulness of time he was able to pass on to his Captain the following Open Letter:

BARE NAVY

"To his Majesty the Keeser.

"Dear your Majesty,

"I have had served out to me this morning at Divisions the Gold metal of the double-breasted order of Eagles, which your Majesty has kindly give me for swimming to the *Hamburg*. I dessay you would like to do something more Substanshal to me. Your Majesty, you would oblige me much if you would post a confidential chit to Captain Newsted of this ship *Turtle*, and ast him to slack off these experimenting quiffs of his for the rest of the commission. Dear Emperer, we don't mind being wayed, but we don't like to be wanting, and if you'd speak privit to the Captain I'm sure he'd listen to you.

"Yours grateful,

"JAMES TWELVES.

"P.S.—It's the canteen I want you to touch him up about, your Majesty. He'll understand."

Captain Newsted read and laughed. "All right, Twelves. I'll grant this request. You'd better go to the Pay-master and get him to draft you a reply to the Emperor."

"And the canteen is always to be stocked, sir?"

"Yes."

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“Then, sir, as the old Admirals used to say, I die happy. I’ll go and tell the lower deck that I’ll have my monument stuck up on Portsea Pontoon, and this shall be my last will and testament—that every man’s dashed well *got* to subscribe a day’s pay towards it, whether he wants to or not, voluntarily, or else explain hisself on paper.”

THE MANLY HEART
IN SECTIONS

THE MANLY HEART

IN SECTIONS

I

O, my love, my love is young.

"WHERE y'bin this two nights, Jim?" asked a blue-jacket of his messmate, Twelves.

"In love, my young friend."

"No, Jim, not that?"

"Alas, yea, Malachi. No more will you observe me at the 'Antigallican.' I'm born again, and all on for gingerbeer."

"This is very sudden, Jim. Are you positive certain you ain't labourin' under a delusion? Spread out your proofs; expatriate your reasons."

"Behold, Malachi, I found myself one forenoon, very early, strikin' me pipe agin the wall and suckin' me matchbox——"

"I've knowed you to do similar things in the evenin', very late, Jim. But you wasn't in love then."

THE MESS DECK

"No; I've thought about that. There is a certain simultaneousness between the reflects of too much whisky on a man and love in its early stages."

"Love in its *very* early stages that must be, Jim. But you'll recover from that in a day or two. It's like an influential cold, exasperatin' and overwhelmin' while it lasts, but soon gone, and gone for ever."

"Malachi, if you scawf like that I must evacuate this mess-stool, or else you must."

"I'm not scawfin', James. I'm philosophisin'."

"Well, then, don't. Keep it for toothache and funerals, and not for love. Mal, she's the most blindin'ly perfect girl ever made."

"I agree with you, Jim."

"Do you know her, then?"

"Not that particular her. But I'm aware of the feelin's in these epidemics. I've had 'em."

"There you are agin! I'll heave a bread-barge at you in a minit. I'm not talking like ordinary fellers. When they're in love they imagine their gels is Fair Helens and Maid Marians all in one. But I ain't lost my judgment, so you needn't think it."

"I don't think you can speak positive about that, Jim. See what a dinky little thing it 'ud be to lose, in your case. You wouldn't miss it."

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"Malachi, I ain't speakin' wild, like other men, when I say my girl is the loveliest in all the whole world. Besides, one of these days you can see her and prove it for yourself and give your own candid opinion. But in her favour, mind, because I tell ye beforehand, chum, I don't want no fault-fandin'. Not that you could find any."

"And all this power of argument in two days," mused Malachi. "She's a fresh acquaintance, I s'pose, Jim?"

"There's no doubt; fresh as a daisy. One stroke of her glance done it, Mal. Sich eyes."

"Yes, I like that colour," agreed Malachi.

"What colour?"

"Jim, you're as fretful as a staff-commander. The colour of her eyes? The colour you said."

"I never said; you're playin' about agin. Why, I don't know it myself. When you're in love you don't see anything clear, let alone eyes."

"What, not with a calm judgment like yours, Jim?"

"Calm? I ain't calm; I'm red-hot. But whatever colours she sails under, that's all one and all right, and there's no deviation about that, Malachi."

"So you've near settled, then, Jim?"

THE MESS DECK

"Jes' so. Every night when I'm ashore you will find me strollin' along the parade or round the castle wid her."

"I shouldn't overdo it, Jim; especially on these snowy nights."

"Snow is nothing to a bluejacket in love, boy-o, nor rain, nor hail, nor frost. On the freezin'est night in winter, wid her alongside, them painted iron seats by the seashore will be kings' thrones, all velvet and gold, and nobly warm."

"But you seem to have a cold awready, Jim?"

"That's on account of this cussed hot messdeck."

"Yes, I should surmise that was it. I'm ketchin' one myself. And have you made any progress in the home these two days, Jim? Talked with pa and ma, eh? You're express in love, I can see. Eighty mile an hour you go."

"I *have* got as fur as the home, Mal. There's no ma, and I ain't in love wid pa. He seems to be a sort of a kind of a bushbaptist and general striker-down, wid boatloads of theories. I was in private clo'es and was most careful to keep to wind'ard of the old man; and when he lammed off about taxes, and how he was agin armaments and navies, I said they cert'n'y ought to be abolished. Then he said he was a peaceful trader, and that peaceful traders

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was the greatest benefactors the world had ever seen. And I said it was so, and that my soleist wish was to be a peaceful trader myself, and sell things, and put the money in a bank. And as he was a grocer, I went on to say that the grandest sort of peaceful tradin' was to consider the poor and let 'em have pear-drops and milky-biscuits dirt cheap and as a favour. But then she caught my eye, and she was frownin', so I stopped.

"But he had a fur-off look in his eye, like the parzon when he's warnin' us unoffensive bluejackets agin hell-fire, and he says, 'And don't you believe in food for all, and——'

"'You bet,' I said hearty. '*And* drink.'

"'And work for all?' he went on, still wid his eye on the extremest horizon.

"'Well,' says I, 'I wouldn't go so fur as that. I'd sooner have rest for all, by a long chalk. Why can't we let the bosky, boundin' earth bring forth corn and wine of its own accord, and sit by and smoke in the interval, and strike down a few pots——,' and then I seed her eye on me agin, so I finished off wid, 'condensed water from the mighty ocean.'

"I wanted to sheer off then, but he started on the eight-hour quiff and overtime, so I said, speakin'

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short, that I ain't troubled wid overtime. My hours is twenty-four per day, and it's a bloomin' good job the days ain't longer.

"Then I hauled off, and he remarked about 'Rude and riband youth, given oyer to unthought and all the devils,' and the girl said I mustn't annoy pa. But I could put up with forty fathers rather than give up her, Malachi."

"Good on ye, Jim. Why, gettin' on the right side of the old man like that, you're as good as married. We'll drink your very good health at the 'Antigallican' this night and for evermore, till you come agin."

"I shall never come agin, Malachi."

"Well, you're in a thunderin' bad way, Jim, that's all I can say." And Malachi deftly dodged a basin and retired to the upper deck.

II

What care I how fair she be,
If she be not fair to me?

I HEARD of Jim's aspirations after the higher life, and when I casually met him a day or two after this conversation, I was surprised to find him alone and unhappy.

THE MANLY HEART

“ ‘Why so pale and wan, fond lover?’ ”

He looked at me vacantly, and spat in the roadway. “It wouldn’t a-bin so bad if it a-bin a *blue* marine,” he said; “but a *red* marine!”

“Why, Jim, what is it?”

“An *insec*, that’s what it is! A crawlin’ leather-neck! A bullock! And now it’s got a dungaree-coloured eye. Why is there such things as marines?”

“ ‘Soldier and sailor too,’ Jim.”

“Sailor! By the seven seas, *sailor*! He don’t even carve his meat like we do in the Navy. He’s a double intender, that’s what he is, and why we carries him is because he was a blackleg in the Spithead mut’ny. He gets favoured by the Adm’alty, and the gels, and everyone.”

“Not by your girl, Jim, surely?”

“Las’ night, my turn aboard. She knows it. I git ashore though, and call round. Find a marine there, a red marine. She says, jist as I’m chuckin’ him through the winder, that he’s on’y called for some groceries, and besides, he’s her cousin. But I can’t go back no more to a gel like that, wid cousins, can I?”

“You seem to have been hasty, Jim.”

“Don’t you think there’s anythink in it then?”

THE MESS DECK

I'm not used to bein' in love. Would you call agin if you was me?"

"Certainly, if I were in earnest."

"Well, I will then, this very night."

He did, and next day Malachi told me he and the marine were in Haslar Hospital.

"Duel?" I asked.

"No. Fire. It appears that about eight las' night he called round and the old man wouldn't let him in. He reckoned that was because of the marine, but he come away quiet, and dropped into the 'Antigallican.' We pulled his leg a bit about bein' dished by a red marine, but he didn't take much notice.

"He didn't strike down much bubbly either. But about ten o'clock he says, in that funeral tone of his'n, 'Malachi,' says he, 'should you think they'd miss one red marine among so many?'

"'I should, Jim,' I says.

"'What, all dressed alike?' he says, 'and all wearin' regulation boots and mustashes?'

"'Certainly.'

"'And 6000 noo'uns joinin' very soon, too?'

"'Look here, Jim,' I said, 'you best chuck the young lady, and live in a Christian frame of mind, like you used.'

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“‘I shall entice him up to the foot-fields by the scruff of his neck,’ said Jim, ‘and lay the facts before him. Either he hauls off prompt and graceful, or else I deposit his remains on a dirt-heap.’

“So he started out, and we followed fur off. We found the grocery business burnin’ and the street full of people, lookin’ at the girl, alone in an upper winder; and there was no engine or escape there yet. Jim had whipped off his boots, and was jist startin’ up the water-pipe. But it was too fur from the winder, so, after pausin’ a minit, he went on to the roof and dug up the slates like mad. He very soon made a hole and dropped out of sight.

“And then the marine came. He had not bin with the girl after all, for the old man said he was agin fightin’ men, and barred him out as well as Jim. The marine had got a ladder, and we helped him to fix it, but the flames spurted out and licked round it. But the marine didn’t care. He undone that nice little military cap of his, what serves to keep the sun off by day and to sleep in at night, and let it down over his neck so as to keep out the sparks, and then shinned up the ladder in double-quick time. Jist as he got in the winder, Jim had bashed in the ceilin’.

“‘Up wid her,’ said Jim. And, because the ladder

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was burnt, the marine done it, Jim took the girl to safety along the roofs, and then went back for the marine, which was rather a surprisin' evolution, considering the way he'd talked about abolishin' that chap. But jist as he was lendin' him a hand the smoke choked him, and he fell through into the room and hurt hissself bad.

"The escape was there by then, and very soon was screwed up to the winder. But because of the flames no one could get up. So the marine hoisted Jim on his shoulders, all unsensible as he was, and slid through the fire with him, jist in time before the upper floor fell through. And they were both wheeled off to the hospital, burnt all over."

"And the girl?" I asked.

"A fraud. She's all right."

III

But my kisses bring again, bring again.

I WENT to see Jim at Haslar in a day or two, and found him swathed in cotton wool, as was the marine, a few beds away.

"My 'ated rival," said Jim cheerfully nodding towards him. "But I've scratched," he added,

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with a touch of melancholy, "I ain't in the runnin'."

"But the marine was shut out too, so she won't have either of you," I said.

"You're in error. She'd have both of us if the law was wid her. And she cries all day long because her pa won't let her have even one of us. He says he's off warlike men. But she herself is dead nuts on them sort of men. Still, she've wrote to say she loves the red marine best out of us two. Marines is always favoured, and bluejackets is always left. Never mind, there's other gels."

"Yes, of course," I began, and was about to quote a stale proverb. Jim saw it coming, and fiercely interjected: "But none like her, so don't you commit yourself. I don't mind philosophisin' on myself, but I shan't be able to stand you or Malachi, so I tell ye. But why she went from the marine to me, and liked him best all the time, I cannot tell. It's one of the mysteries of her sect, I s'pose."

"Her name's Anemone, isn't it, Jim?"

"Yes. But what's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing, nothing," I said.

THE MESS DECK

IV

Anemones, windflowers.

SOME weeks afterwards I met Jim in the main street of Pompey, whole and sound.

"Come wid us," he commanded, and then dragged me along with him.

"You're out of the list then, Jim?"

"Yes. So's the marine. There he is, look!"

I looked ahead, and saw the red marine hurrying along with Anemone.

"What's in the wind, Jim?" said I.

"Cuttin'-out expedition. I'm the rareguard."

"Is Malachi in advance?"

"No. He wouldn't take a deal in this. He's very changeable. Now you know yourself how he was dead agin my marryin', don't ye?"

"He certainly was."

"Very well then, you'd think he'd be glad now it's the red marine and not me. But no, he's still dissatisfied; and when I proposed for him to help in this abduction he busted off into the most outrageous langwidge about marines. Why, they're the most magnificent corps that ever was, all globes and laurels and glory."

THE MANLY HEART

“‘No,’ says he; ‘I’ll help any bluejacket to abduct, but a red marine can cussed well do his own abductions.’

“I told him this was a special case, and this particular sea-soldier had saved me from bein’ baked.

“‘Well, you went to save him as well,’ says he.

“‘Yes, but the girl prefers him,’ says I.

“‘That’s bluff,’ says Malachi. ‘A bluejacket didn’t ought to haul off for a marine. That red marine bluffed her into sayin’ that, and you could easy persuade her to contradict it. Her name’s Anenomy.’

“So I had to tell him I wasn’t goin’ to marry jist as a matter of doin’ someone’s baulk and showin’ what the Navy *could* do. And I can’t see what her name’s got to do wid it.”

“It’s a very beautiful name,” I ventured to say.

“That’s what I told him, and he says it means blown by all the four winds of heaven. Heaven I grant, but blown I deny. I gave her up of my own free will. But I wish there was another gel jist like her, don’t you? I mean do you think there is?”

“I should say——”

“Well, you needn’t I know there ain’t. I shall die a single man. But I don’t feel very brash.

THE MESS DECK

Every now and agin I feel as if I wish I was a marine."

"Why was it necessary to hurry it through like this, Jim? Why abduct?"

"The old man wanted Anemony to join up wid a grocer's mate—a reg'lar bundle of impediments: so me and the marine went to church as soon as we could to learn up the instructions about weddin's. But these parzons are a hard lot if they find you're anxious.

"'Five bob plain,' says one, 'and if you want a merry peal and full chorus half-a-dollar extry.'

"So we closed wid that at last. Hillo, there they go inside. The old man thinks she's jist gone to the drapery bazaar. He'll be surprised; so will the crooked little grocer's mate. But surprises and experiences makes the world go round, don't they? Come on in."

* * * * *

So Anemone married the red marine, and Jim Twelves went away for three years to forget his love in routine and in the African wars.

A "HARD-LYING" TALE

A "HARD-LYING" TALE

"WELL," said the Torpedo Coxswain, "there's no call for you to believe it—not if it's a strain on your faith-bump. But you know very well that Blue-jackets always tells the George Washington truth, except it's more artistic not to, or more useful, or they ain't thinking."

"True," I said. "Yet the papers have been quiet."

"The papers! By all the Sea Lords! you don't think *they* know all about the Navy, do ye? Why, if a ha'p'ny paper heard the merest trifle of what I've been expounding to you, there'd have to be real war to-morrow, wouldn't there?"

"There'd be a row in the *Chronicle*, at all events," I said.

* * * * *

The coxswain's tales were usually true, but this is what he had just been telling me. He had been away for some days on his first destroyer, and I had

THE MESS DECK

asked him how he liked it. And he answered that the quarters were not over-comfortable, but that the excitement of the war with France was worth any amount of hard-lying.

Now, there was no war with France, and I said so.

"You will have observed," then said he, "that occasionally a lieutenant is jumped up over a lot of others to be a commander. With your usual gloomy predestination, you would say that was Freemasonry or the German Emperor at work. But you would be wrong. It's meretricious service on torpedo-boats and destroyers.

"Stand at Point on a Monday morning. Count the destroyers sliding out, also the torpedo-boats; and in the evening take tally again. They don't all return. Where are they? Night exercises, you say, or Portland or Brighton. Some."

"Watch the *Navy List*. Names and numbers drops out. What becomes of them boats? Old—sold out—wrecked, you say. Quite right—for some. Others—took by France."

"But what about International complications and unfriendly acts, Rattler?"

"There ain't no complications, and they're friendly acts."

"Construe, my learned friend."

A "HARD-LYING" TALE

"It's part of the war game our people play with the French. Why, even the papers have got hold of one point in it. They know about these naval attatchees. What are they over here for? You know as well as I do that they are here to get to know things about our Navy. When we've invented anything partic'larly devilish, the attatchee is invited down to see it act. 'What d'ye think of that, me boy?' says the adm'als. The attatchee says he don't think much of it, and then goes home and writes a description to his Gov'ment, and says it's a first-class affair, and a bloomin' good job he was here to see it, and his Gov'ment immeejutly gives him more pay. That's what they call diplomacy. I tell ye, there's no secrets in these days, except this war with France."

"And are these war pigeons, flown from Dover, all in the game?"

"Every one of 'em. But you needn't be afraid about them. We've got an anecdote for pigeons."

"And what is that antidote?"

"Golden eagles, chum; golden eagles, what makes a speciality of eating war-pigeons."

"But golden eagles are very scarce."

"Well, now you've got the reason of it. The Navy's got 'em all. If the Adm'alty determined

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to get great auks it'd be just the same; they'd hatch out them three sole surviving eggs in the Museum."

"But now we're getting off the war game, Rattler. How's it played?"

"The Adm'alty's got all the charts in the world, especially French charts. Very good. But you can't take a ship into a difficult place by charts alone, even on a fine day. At any rate, you wouldn't. And our destroyers ain't going into French harbours on fine days. They're going in on dark nights when the stormy winds do blow, or else in a sea fog. You savvy, then, that what we requires to do is to personally examine them French coasts for ourselves."

"Yes," said I.

"The French does the same on our coasts, of course. And then the question comes, what are we to do when we catch 'em doing it? The adm'als, French and English, settled that by making a by-law, like the railway companies, and just as arbitrary, and said any torpedo-boat or other ship, vessel, galley, coracle, et sitra, found trespassing in or about our harbours, ports, reaches, and fifty-three other places, after dark, will be confiscated, and to this rule there will be no exception. And if one of our lieutenants loses his vessel he's retired on half-pay,

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but if he finds out things, and adventures himself to do daring acts, he's promoted.

"Now our cap'n (which the papers calls a lootenant-commander) was a reg'lar caution at exploring, and got to know all the coasts of France, from Calais round to Brest, on the darkest of nights, and wasn't never caught; so that his time for promotion was near come. But one night when we was doing guard-boat dooty off the mouth of our own harbour, a French torpedo-boat must have got by us, because her mark was left on the flag-ship in the morning.

"So the adm'al called up our cap'n and spun him a cuff about neglect of dooty and how it mustn't occur again else he'd be annoyed.

"And the cap'n lammed off at us as soon as he got aboard for not keeping a good look-out. That night he stopped on deck himself through all the watches. It was a dirty night too.

"In the morning the adm'al signalises to us that the French boat has been in again.

"Now as we had stuck as near the narrow harbour mouth as we could from sunset to dawn, we didn't understand this; and the cap'n said to the sub-lootenant that he reckoned someone was cheating, because he couldn't think a Frenchman was able to get to wind'ard of us so easy as this.

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“The sub-lieutenant suggested submarine boats, and the cap’n thought there was something in that. But it didn’t comfort him.

“Next time we was guard-boat, about a week after, it happened to be blowing again, so we surmised the Frenchman would have another look round. We kept up steam for thirty-two knots and just whizzed about the ship-channel and the Swashes, so that we should most surely see any boat that came along on *top* of the water.

“Once, as we was tearing along the Outer Swash, we bumped, like on a rock, where there certainly was no rock. And one hand said he seen a line of surf, and another said he seen flame in the air; but we guessed that that was in consequence of the concussion acting on his optical delusions. It really seemed as if it must a’ been a recent risen rock or a derelict, and the cap’n made a note of it.

“An hour after we was going along the ship-channel towards the harbour. And as we neared the Swashes I seen a long white line like the wake of a vessel. ‘After her!’ says the cap’n. So we pelted on, but I could not distinguish the vessel causing the wake. Getting nearer, the look-out could make out the bow-wave, and trace the waves along the vessel’s side to the wake, but still we couldn’t see the boat

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herself. And as we overhauled the invisible thing its bow-wave moved faster, and flames flickered along in the air for a minute or so, at about the height of a smoke-stack.

" 'Turn the searchlight on her,' says the cap'n.

"It was done. And all the effects of a boat rushing through the water was to be seen, but no boat.

" 'The devil!' thinks I. 'This is the flying Dutchman, at steam tattics, or else all my education has been wasted. Can you see her yet, sir?' I says to the cap'n.

" 'No,' says he.

"We crept up nearer, and he says, 'Can *you* see her?'

" 'No, sir,' says I, 'I surmise she's a ghost.'

" 'Damme,' says he, 'I believe you're right. Well, we'll see whether she's unbreakable, as well as invisible. Steer so as to cut her down.'

"So I done it. But the wake wriggled about like a snake, avoiding us. I began to feel a bit shaky over the business. There seemed as much sense chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, or one of them fire-balls that plays about the masthead sometimes. I was afraid she would try to draw us on to a shoal, but she stuck to the channels very well.

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“‘That ghost seems to know her way,’ said the cap’n, and then he shouted, ‘Lay down, men,’ as we finally headed off the wake and nipped in behind the bow-wave at full-speed, triple-expansions, and forced draught, and all them gadgets. It seemed a funny order, to lay down, as if he was going to ram something solid, but I thought it was force of habit made him say so, when—*crash!* There was a horrible grinding and crunching, and a hissing like a thousand devils, and then screams of agony. And in a second or two we saw white ghost faces floating in the darkness, weeping and wailing. Ugh, I shuddered, and very near let go the wheel.

“The cap’n stood firm, and telegraphed ‘Full speed astarn,’ and as we backed off from the terrible nothing we had bashed into, some of them floating gashly faces followed us, gibbering and moaning. And our men what was for’ard let off a shriek like one man and bolted aft when two or three of these fearful things come over the bows. As the search-light played on ’em there was no doubt they was faces, human faces; but there was no body nor other support. I shivered and my teeth rattled, and I reckoned the last day was come, and these was hell-hounds. I tried hard to think of a prayer, which I’d read in books was the thing to do on these

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occasions, but I could get no further forward than 'Ar Fair chart neven,' like we used to say in school.

"But the cap'n, even if he thought of lifting a prayer, very soon thought better of it, and swore a great oath and laughed. 'Scissors!' he says, 'is that it?' And he jabbered away to these ghosts in a foreign lingo, so we surmised they must be French ghosts.

"And then he signalled 'Ahead!' to the engine-room, and told me to take her back where we come from. There was flames spitting up into the air, and steam was hissing and forming a great white cloud, and the fearful faces was in the air round about, crying and calling. And why they did not fly to us like their friends I could not understand. But the searchlight showed another funny thing: On the water's edge, and rising from it, there appeared a gash, like in the side of a ship, but no ship—a bung-hole with no cask round it, so to speak.

"'Go slow,' says the cap'n, as we neared this creepy lot. We went so, and rasped alongside something, I mean nothing, and then them frightened faces come on board, and I noticed there was an occasional hand, all by itself, and in one or two cases there was a whole body, from the waist up, arms and all, and they looked more gashly than the faces

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alone. Then we went astarn again, and in a minute or two that hole sunk deeper in the water and then disappeared in a blaze of fireworks with a loud explosion. And by that time I was rotten with sweat and dry as a lime-kiln. But the cap'n was off his head with happiness over something, and set the course for the harbour. And before he went to see the adm'al he had to tell us what really had happened, else we should all have broke out of the ship, we was that scared."

"And what was it all, Rattler?"

"*Invisible paint*, my boy! It was an invention of the French cap'n's. He'd seen that these so-called invisible greys and imperceptible pinks was nothing of the kind, so he set to work to get the real thing, and there's no doubt it was a grand success. He not only painted every bit of his boat, but his men's clothes and gloves, and gave 'em masks to wear. It was a fine affair altogether, and if he had only had a faster boat he'd still have his secret. Of course, when we run his boat down some of his men was below, without their masks, and it was them coming on deck that looked like floating faces, and the stokers, later on, like half men. And mind you, this tale I've told you is about what I've seen myself, but the cuffs I could spin about what I

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haven't seen is much more surprising and just as true."

"I believe you, Rattler," said I.

"Well, if you don't it don't matter. You can see for yourself that the cap'n's promoted"—I certainly did see that—"and if you're down by the Outer Swash to-morrow you'll notice divers at work. The Navy's going to analyse that torpedo-boat, and split up that paint into its competent parts."

I took a boat to the Outer Swashway on the next day, and divers *were* at work.

THE FAMOUS ADVENTURE OF
THE LEADING HANDS

THE FAMOUS ADVENTURE OF THE LEADING HANDS

“What for do we join the Navy? For the fat livin’ and the funeral—the funeral wid full naval honours. But what for *really* do we join? Well, honest, it’s for ship’s t’bacca and glory.”—*The Bluejacket: a Comedy*.

IT was towards the close of the third year of H.M.S. *Tarantula*’s commission that five of her leading hands arranged for their famous picnic. They each “put in” for a day’s leave, and got it; they took the dinghy, by permission of the first lieutenant; and the gunner’s mate persuaded the gunner to allow them rifles and ammunition. Besides the gunner’s mate, the party consisted of the chief armourer, the leading torpedo-man, the Captain’s coxswain, and the sergeant-major of marines, and very early one fine morning those five adventurers sailed away for the Lafu river, ten miles south of the Lasmayu roadstead, where the *Tarantula* lay anchored.

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The dinghy had not gone a couple of miles when the picnickers discovered that they had brought no provisions. So they turned back to get some, the Lafu river having no supplies to speak of.

"This," said the sergeant-major, "is what comes of havin' five commandin' officers and no workin' hands. It's all right for 'kinyans'—they had some store of darkest hell whiskey aboard—" 'kinyans' we can all five of us easy recommember, but the *commisserrant* department didn't ought to be left to chance like that. A picnic, there's no doubt, ought to be conducted with a certain amount of routine."

"No pipeclay, 'Major,' if it's all the same to you," interrupted the armourer.

"And I begs to propose," continued the sergeant-major, ignoring the hit at his profession, "that the gunner's mate takes on cap'n of this turn-out."

"Hear, hear," said Chats, the L.T.O. (Leading Torpedo-man). "It's clearly understood that in all cases of picnic parties the commander spreads the table-cloth and looks after the spoons, ain't it? I'm all on for the gunner's mate."

So were the other two, and the gunner's mate gruffly, and as his due, accepted the post.

The boat victualled amid the unflattering remarks

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of the ship's company, and at 7.30 a.m. again shoved off. The river-mouth was reached about nine o'clock, but the picnickers' objective was a great way up the river, near a village called Mkumbi, where there might be a chance of replenishing the "wet" provisions. This spot was only attained at high noon.

* * * *

Lasmayu and the Lafu river are in East Africa, north of Zanzibar. H.M.S. *Tarantula*, with three or four others of her Majesty's vessels, comprised the East Coast Division of the Cape Station. This division patrols all the coast from Gaza to the Juba river, putting down the slave trade, assisting the British consuls and pro-consuls, and keeping the peace of the whole seaboard.

Each ship carries two or more Arab or Swahili interpreters, whose main business is to get information as to intended slave runs. They land each evening if near a town, and, by means of informers and spies in their pay, ascertain the movements of the slavers. Now-a-days captures are very infrequent. Many times, indeed, the *Tarantula's* interpreters would come off quivering with excitement, and with much gesticulation and rolling of eyes, give absolutely certain information of an intended run. The whole ship would get excited with them, too, during

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the early part of the commission, and often the boats were called away and eagerly manned for a night's slave-chasing. But it was always a fiasco. They would lay for long hours by the mangrove swamps, or scour creeks and coasts and estuaries from sunset to dawn, at the bidding of the interpreters, but at the end of nearly three years not a single slaver had been captured, not a single slave set free. And that is why this picnic of the P.O.'s becomes the most notable event of the commission.

After dinner the five were going shooting, but the day was so hot that they determined, like Amaryllis, to do their sporting in the shade.

"This 'kinyans' don't make ye much cooler, do it?" observed the armourer.

The remark was a reflection on a lecture the ship's doctor had given a short time before on spirit-drinking. The doctor was an enthusiastic teetotaler, and had shown that alcohol, so far from being a necessity, was not even a luxury. He quoted Dr. Nansen, who was all in favour of sugar when you are camping out on icepacks, and whaling captains, who swore by hot coffee; and wound up by saying that although a nip of spirits apparently warms the body, yet really its action is to lower its vitality and eventually to cool it.

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"No, it don't *seem* to make you cooler," said the L.T.O., "but then the doctor's main argument was to show what delusions we're labouring under, us common men. We drink 'kinyans' and get hot—at least, we feel hot and look hot——"

"And, damme, for all practical purposes we *are* hot," said the sweating sergeant-major.

"Exactly, my man," continued the L.T.O., imitating the doctor. "But theoretically we are delightfully cool, and therefore we are doin' quite right to drink spirits in the tropics. Coffee's all very well on the North American Station, where they want to warm up, but fatal, absolutely fatal, under a broilin' sun."

"But there's another point," said the armourer, sipping his whiskey. "If you takes the wine when it's red, or even 'kinyans' when it's a nootral tint, it lowers your vital stakistics."

"Orgies! vitiated orgies!" corrected the captain's coxswain.

"If you lower your vitiated orgies much more, Hooky, you'll be standin' on 'em," said the L.T.O. "What McDonald was sayin' was that all liquor, even *tambo*, lowers your vital forces, wasn't you, Mac?"

The armourer confessed that he was. "And why

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we puts away stuff so lowerin' to the vitals," he added, "I do not know."

"Now you're gettin' on to squaro and top-shelf stuff, Mac. What's the matter with 'kinyans'?"

"Nothink, I admit. Pass it along." And the contrite armourer lowered some into his vitals.

But the day was really too hot for scientific argument, and so, gradually, the conversation waned, and the five holiday-makers "fell on sleep," as the poets say, and for the rest of the afternoon lay in the deep easy slumber of seamen. It was only as the sun was at its setting that the captain's coxswain roused, and stared for a moment at the long shadows. Then he woke in earnest and observed the wind and tide for a minute or two.

"We're properly adrift this time," he muttered, and rapidly awakened the other four. No one thanked him, but all growled, because he had not done it sooner, which is the way of the Navy.

The boat was hurriedly launched. There was just enough wind to keep steerage way with the sail set, but the mid-stream current was strong, and the forlorn picnickers—who were at least two hours late in starting back—slid between the darkening banks towards the sea at a fair pace, each man silently filling his pipe.

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"Lend us a match, someone," growled the gunner's mate, sticking his black clay in his mouth.

The armourer remarked that he had none left.

No one else spoke, but each waited, pipe in hand or mouth, for someone else to produce the matches.

"Come on, out with 'em," said the gunner's mate, impatiently.

Each man was by this time over-hauling himself to see if he had any. It was all in vain, and the dreadful truth broke over the unfortunate five that they had to face a five hours' pleasure trip with neither of the attributes of pleasure. "Kinyans," alas! was exhausted, and now smoking was impossible. Mkumbi was higher up the river, and it was not likely to have matches as a commodity. There was nothing for it but to sit, like the famous tea-party, "all silent and all damned," and invent excuses to satisfy the first lieutenant for breaking their leave.

The gunner's mate at last broke the silence. "Of all the cussed, dashed, blasted, blighted idjuts in the Navy," he said, slowly and deliberately, "us five are the dashedest, blastedest, blightedest, and cussedest."

"Thanks, Sammy," said the L.T.O. "Continue."

"And such a devil of a lot of tandstickors as they makes in Germany too! And the little cherib, the sweet little cherib what looks arter poor Jack, what

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about him? Eh, you theory men, where's he?" and the gunner's mate slapped the L.T.O. on the back.

Chats said, dryly, "Well, let *X* equal the sweet little cherib, and *Y* the missin match——"

"And *why* the missin' match? That's the main objec'. None of your Euclid for me! None of your *Vernon* touches! All this X-chasin' and theory muck don't give us no matches. It's useless, theory is."

"How about the theory of gunnery?" asked the L.T.O. "That ought to teach us how to get a light, with rifles and ammunition."

"Good on ye, Chats," said the coxswain. "I can remember being taught about that on the *Saint*."

"The theory is this," continued the L.T.O. "Load with blank cartridge, stick a piece of slow-match on the cleanin'-rod, and hold it just clear of the muzzle of the rifle. When fired the charge will naturally ignite the slow-match."

"Where's your slow-match?" grunted the gunner's mate.

"As I was about to say, my dear Sammy, paper will have to do, this journey."

At once all but the coxswain, who was at his usual post, the tiller, set about extracting bullets from cartridges and experimenting in the way de-

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scribed, with the result that four bits of paper were blown into the water, quickly followed by four more. Again and again the trial was made, with the same result, varied by the paper being held so far off that the flame failed to touch it.

"No go! Theory again!" said the disgusted gunner's mate.

"How about a train of damp powder?" queried the armourer.

A train was laid on the gunwale, and a half-charge fired into it. What wasn't blown away fizzed out too quickly to catch a piece of paper held to it. While it was being tried again the sergeant-major and the L.T.O. conducted an experiment of their own in the bows of the boat. The marine held the gunner's mate's straw hat on a cleaning-rod while the seaman fired a full charge obliquely through the crown of it. The hat was old and greasy, and they had every reasonable hope of igniting it. That experiment also failed, and the disheartened petty officers settled themselves in gloomy silence for the long down-river sail. Each sucked his unlit pipe, and furtively searched and researched his pockets.

An hour passed. It had long been quite dark, and it was necessary to keep a look-out man in the

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bows. He and the helmsman were the only men who spoke. During the second hour, while the gunner's mate was taking his spell in the bow, he saw a dhow's sail glide out from one of the side creeks, and show dimly against the stars. He passed the word to the others, without importing any significance to it.

The L.T.O. roused himself sufficiently to say, "What about them lucifers, then?"

"Well, what about 'em?" snapped the gunner's mate, savagely.

"On'y if I was commandin' this packet I should heave that dhow to, and get some. Please yourself though. P'raps you don't care to smoke."

"Here, hand us a muskit!" was the gunner's mate's response. "What's Swyhili for 'heave to'?"

"'Tuâ tanga.' But the best language is a shot across her bows. All nations and languages understand that."

The dhow was now maybe five hundred yards off the port bow of the dinghy, and well in the main stream. The hull was hidden against the dark background of mangroves, but the sail was just discernible. The dinghy was probably quite invisible from the larger vessel. No sound came from either boat.

The gunner's mate broke the silence of the night

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with a tremendous shout of "Tuâ tanga! Tuâ! Tuâ!" and without waiting for an answer, fired his rifle. The dhow's big lateen sail dropped literally as if shot, and she was lost to sight immediately.

"Out oars!" shouted the rifleman. "We shall lose them matches after all."

The oars were in the crutches smartly, and the dinghy rapidly moved towards the dhow. The latter's hull soon appeared, and as the small boat neared her the sail was seen to be lying confusedly over her side, while the crew were struggling to get the sweeps out.

"I do believe Sammy's shot must have cut away the halyards of that sail," said the coxswain. "It was lowered terrible smart."

"Jest like Samuel, that is," growled the armourer over his oar. "We're goin' in for leave-breakin' as it is, and now he's goin' to luff us in for piratin' on the high seas with aggravatin' circumstances. Jest fancy respectable married men like me and Sammy swingin' at the yardarm for murderin' peaceful Swyhilis."

"This is all theory, y'know," said the gunner's mate, a trifle frightened. "Still, p'raps we better sheer off. We shan't be able to make 'em understand what we want, either."

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"You stay boat-keeper then," said the L.T.O. "I'm a single man wantin' a match, I am; and I'm going to get it. Look out; we're nearin' her. Hooky, give Sam the tiller. Us four board altogether, carryin' our rifles. We'll bounce the cap'n we took him for a slaver, and demand to see his papers. Then we'll let him off for givin' us all this trouble, if he'll give us a light. Way enough! Stand by to jump aboard as soon as we get alongside. Prepare to board. Board!" And as the dinghy rased against the dhow's side the four men scrambled over the low bulwark of the native vessel and leapt upon the deck. As they did so there was a succession of splashes on the other side of the dhow. The crew and captain had dived off.

"There's no doubt them poor chaps do take us for gory cut-throat buccaneers," said the L.T.O.

"Here!" he shouted to the swimmers, who were making for the shore. "Hi! Hold on a minit! We sailormen! English! We no hurt you!" They took no notice. "Well, I can't speak no fairer than that, can I?" he said, turning to his friends.

They admitted that he couldn't. The serjeant-major added that he thought they'd better cut and run themselves. "This is turnin' into a serious business, y'know, Chats."

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"My dear 'Major,' I want a light. Help us off with this forehatch. Hooky, feel round the after-cabin, will ye? Fine touch this, ain't it?" went on the L.T.O. "Five leadin' hands plunderin' an in-offensive trader."

"Phew!" ejaculated the sergeant-major, as the hatch-covering was taken off. "Inoffensive! She's putrid! I reckon she's a sort of a night-tun."

Chats knelt on the deck and peered down the hatchway. There arose a sound of laboured breathing and stifled moans.

"Cattle?" suggested the sergeant-major.

"Yes. Long pork," answered the L.T.O., who had been in the South Seas. "Down with the hatch! Up with the sail! Mates, never mind the matches. We've got a prize-packet here."

"I don't like the smell of her," said the armourer. "But what is it you're talkin' about? What's the noise, to put it classic?"

"Slaves, that's what it is. By the ghost of marines, she's full of 'em. I seen the whites of their eyes, plain as anything. Make fast the dinghy, Sam, and come aboard. You won't be hung, so don't be afraid," he added, as the gunner's mate hesitated. "This piracy turns out to be meritorious service—slave-catching. We shan't have to sneak inboard, Samuel,

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avoidin' the eye of Number One, but we shall go back simply covered with glory."

"Are you quite sure about all this?" said the gunner's mate as he stepped aboard.

"Here's some matches," said the coxswain, "so we can see."

They lifted the hatch, and peeped below again. Undoubtedly a human cargo was there, dumb and piteous, frightened into silence by the Arabs.

"Well, then, now for it," said the gunner's mate, whose confidence was restored. "Better get up this sail, I s'pose?"

"Let's light up first," said the L.T.O. calmly.

The suggestion met with favour, and then the buccaneers set about seeing what mischief their shot had done. It was found to have cut the halyard and chipped the yard, but the latter was not materially damaged. The necessary repairs, therefore, consisted simply of rebending (re-tying) the pendant to the yard. The sail was then hoisted, and with light hearts the seamen swept on down the river, smoking deliciously. The breeze had freshened, and the dhow sailed fast.

Chats, the L.T.O., sat thoughtfully for awhile. Then he said—"We received information that this packet was to sail, when we was picnickin'. So we

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forgot all about our dinner, just nicely laid, and considered evolutions all the afternoon. We carefully examined the matter in all its bearin's and cross-questioned the informer, and finally surmised that a sudden attack by us five was worth tryin'. We worried a good bit about bein' adrift after our leave was up (and never recovered our lost appetites, we might mention), and felt we was settin' a bad example to the ship's company, and the service in general. But we conquered our inclinations, which was to go straight back, and lay to at nightfall just off the creek, conceivin' that to be the strategic point. It was. The dhow comes out. We run alongside of her, and with our muskets in our hands (and I may remark that I've expended all my cartridges, and mine was unloaded) we swarm up her starboard gangway, while nine blood-thirsty Arabs dive off the port quarter and swim for their lives. How will that do, eh?"

The others had listened with rapt attention. Chats was a well-known novelist.

"Sounds all right," said the sergeant-major, "except them nine Arabs. *Nine?*"

"That number is an estimate, my dear 'Major.' In the heat of battle you never count exact, but you never count under. Savvy?"

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"I do. We might mention Sammy's marvelous gunnery practice, though. Five hundred yards' range; whole objec' scarcely in sight; Sam sights for invisible detail and hits it. I never see such——"

"*Tuâ! Tuâ tanga?*" rang out over the waters. The river had opened out, and the dhow was nearing the open ocean. Four or five large streams met and formed a delta with the Lafu river, and the navigation of the delta was intricate and nicely suited to the slavers. The boat whence the hail had come could just be made out rounding one of the islands, and rowing to cut the dhow off.

"A rescue, eh?" said the gunner's mate. "We oughtn't to 'a hung about so long lightin' pipes, Chats. We give them chaps too long a start."

"Bang!" went a rifle.

"Lay down, all of ye!" said the L.T.O. "You can keep out of sight pretty well, too, Hooky, while you're steerin'. I'll look after the sheet."

Again the Swahili command to heave to was shouted, and another rifle was fired. The "s-s-s-s" of the bullet across the bows followed.

A third shout was followed by a volley from three or four rifles. The one or two shots that hit went through the sail.

"Tryin' Sammy's dodge," observed the armourer.

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"But I reckon they 'ain't got a marksman like him."

Two other boats now appeared from the other side, well on the dhow's beam, and advanced firing. For a while the firing from each boat was very hot, and the dhow's sail was frequently hit. Still she forged ahead, and the pulling boats dropped gradually back, off her quarters.

"I didn't know Arabs used rowlocks," said the armourer, as the firing slackened a bit. "D'ye hear the regular stroke of the oars, Chats? Gad! it's our own boats, I do believe!"

"So it is!" assented the sergeant-major, joyfully. "Hail 'em, Sam, to stop that damned rifle practice."

"Hang on a bit," said the L.T.O., as the gunner's mate prepared to shout. "Consider. Are we to go to all the trouble and expense of capturin' a slave dhow to give it away to these other chaps? And lose all the glory, too? Why, they'd swear they could have captured it without our help."

"Right you are, Chats," agreed the coxswain.

"Therefore, mates, I say on to glory or the grave. 'Hear the river-bar roarin' at the ocean-gate?' There's freedom there, Sam. Buck up, 'Major'!"

"Look here, Chats," urged the latter, "this is carryin' the game a bit too far, ain't it? We break

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our leaf, we turn pirates, and now, damme, we're runnin' a cargo of slaves, and openly defyin' our own cap'n. It won't do!"

"‘Major,’ you’ve got no soul. I know you’re married and ain’t the man you was, but hang it all, look at the reason of it. For our own sakes we musn’t be took. I knew who was after us at first. I whispered it to Hooky, didn’t I, Hook? But there was no call for us to alarm you married men and get you into trouble at home. We hoped you wouldn’t have suspected anything. Why didn’t you keep quiet, Mac? Well, you’ll have to swear you took ’em for Arabs. Here we are, safe." And the dhow, trailing the dinghy, passed the bar, and gained the ocean. The boats were lost in the blackness behind.

The dhow set her course for the *Tarantula*, and at eight bells in the middle watch (4 a.m.) cast anchor in the Lasmayu roadstead.

The L.T.O. and the captain’s coxswain at once took the dinghy and rowed to the *Tarantula*, just as the first lieutenant came on deck.

"Come aboard, sir," said Chats.

"Is this what you call nine o’clock? I shall report you all to the captain. I had just come up to send a boat in search of you. Nice trustworthy set of men for P.O.’s we’ve got! Where are the others?"

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You're a disgrace to the service. Where are the others, I say?"

"Formin' the prize crew, sir?"

"Forming the what?"

"Prize crew, sir."

"What of? Where did you meet the other boats?"

"Which boats, sir?"

"What are you a prize crew of?" snapped the lieutenant, angrily.

"Slave dhow, sir."

"Then you did meet the boats?"

"We took this dhow on our own, sir."

"What! You five in the dinghy!"

"There's no deviation about that, sir. And then we had a runnin' fight with some murderin' filibusters lower down the river. Reg'lar cut-throat lot they looked. Made our sail as holey as a kitchen cullender. But we outsailed them."

Then the L.T.O. was invited to tell his whole story, and the mollified lieutenant called the captain.

While the latter was hearing the tale of the adventurous five, the *Tarantula's* pinnace and two cutters, under the command of the second lieutenant, came alongside, and the lieutenant came inboard and made his report. They had chased a dhow, he said,

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but she was a very fast sailer and escaped in the darkness.

"Never mind, Smithson, listen to this," said the captain.

When Chats came to the account of the attempted rescue by the slaver's friends, as he called it, the captain's eyes twinkled. The second lieutenant stared.

"You'd better go over and see to the capture, Smithson," said the captain, when the tale was done. "You might find a trace or two of your marksmen. Pity the gunner's mate wasn't with *you* though. Is that a *true* part of your story, Anson, that shot of the gunner's mate?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And," said Lieutenant Smithson, "had you really no suspicion that that precious rescue party was the pinnace and cutters?"

"Not the faintest, sir."

"Well, I used to give you credit for being an intellectual man——"

"Yes, sir," interpolated Chats, trying to look dull and stupid.

"But now—well, now I think more of your intellect than ever," the lieutenant wound up sarcastically.

"Gunner's mate was commandin' officer, sir."

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"No doubt," said Lieutenant Smithson, dryly.

* * * * *

The dhow went before the prize-court at Zanzibar and was condemned. When captured she had forty-six slaves on board. A flattering account of the capture appeared in the papers, and the Admiral, when inspecting the ship soon after, at the conclusion of her commission, referred, in his speech to the ship's company, to the five petty officers in generous terms. They were, he said, examples to be copied by all young bluejackets and marines. Their daring, resourcefulness, resolution, and regard for the good of the service was most commendable. And he was pleased to ask their captain to give them all "recommends" for higher ratings.

After it was all over the blushing heroes met together on the mess-deck.

"It's all through that shot of Sam's," said the coxswain. "I'll swear if I tried to shoot across a ship's bows I'd 'a done it easy. But Sam always tries to do your 'baultk.'"

"Still, if I hadn't wanted that match, I shouldn't 'a thought of shootin' to cut them halyards," said the gunner's mate, magnificently. He was quite persuaded by this time that he had deliberately sighted for the rope.

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"There's no doubt it was a happy thought," said Chats. "How about that other shot, Sam, the one that carried away the crown of your hat? Felt any pain from it?"

"Not much. Of course, I felt a sort of wind at the time, and it raised a bit of a lump. But I took no notice. You don't in action. The excitement carries ye on. We was just crossin' the bar when I felt it."

"Interestin' experience," said the L.T.O., musingly. "I've heard of men bein' clean-shaved by a cannon-ball, and havin' their hair cut short with a shovel-headed spear, but yours is the best cuff I've ever heard. I s'pose you're goin' to keep the hat as a curio?"

"Rather! There's some people wouldn't believe how near I'd been to havin' my head bloo off unless I showed 'em that."

"And will that convince 'em?"

"Certainly. Besides, you're witnesses. You as good as see it done, didn't ye?"

"We *did* see it done, Sam. You always call on us."

And the coxswain winked in reply to the grin of the L.T.O., and observed that if he'd had his head and hat bashed about by the enemy like that, he'd

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have put in not only for a new hat—but for a new head. “Any doctor will certify that your brain’s afflicted, Sam.”

And the gunner’s mate good-naturedly threw a half-boot at the coxswain, and suggested that, after all, “kinyans” was the main thing.

THE EMERGENCY RATION

THE EMERGENCY RATION

"This ration is not to be opened except by order of an Officer, or in extremity." It "is calculated to maintain strength for 36 hours if eaten in small quantities at a time." The ration consists of 4 oz. of Pemmican and 4 oz. of Cocoa Paste.—*From the Label on the Tin.*

"I VOLUNTEERED for a picnic once," said the L.T.O., "and I was luffed in for once, and for the future I shall refuse all invitations; that is, unless my superior officer invites me. He isn't like your personal friends that you can dare to be a Daniel to, and say 'No,' like they impressed on us in Sunday-school as one of the sole duties of man.

"When I heard the Cap'n say to Lootenant Senton, the Navigator, 'I want you to take charge of a little up-river picnic,' I felt a precussion of what was comin'.

"'You will take twenty men and see if the River Jujube is navigable up to Bamango. The Admiral will be here in ten or twelve days, so I'll give you a week or so. Choose your own men.'

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"I knew the Navigator had a partic'lar likin' for me, so I schemed out of his way as long as I could. We was just gettin' ready for a little fight with M'Gooli, a chief who lived about two weeks' march from the coast, through thick woods, and his town of Bamango was situated on the river, so the Swahilis at Mombasa said.

"The Navigator sent for me very soon. 'Anson,' he says, 'get into your landin'-rig at once, we're off on a picnic.'

"'I'm a reg'lar failure at them, sir,' I says.

"'Nonsense,' says he, 'you were a brilliant success before. You will bring thirty charges of gun-cotton.'

"So there I was, in for it. A little steam-launch was goin', and a big canoe, with niggers for paddlin', the river not bein' wide enough for ordinary pullin' boats. I was in with the niggers, a' course, as the sweetest place. Niggers, as you may know, smells. If you're below the smell descends; if alongside, it spreads; and if you're round the corner, it circum-navigates. And this you can prove for yourself in any town in East Africa, and also you can calculate the strikin' distance and the area of disturbance, and get out of the way to a gratifyin' extent. But in a canoe you can't evaporate like that, and to be

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squashed up with ten paddlers, not to speak of a hoary steersman, is to be permangated with the odour, to speak hygienic. For two days we was miserable, and then we got used to the effluvia, just like you get used to the Navy. But then we became covered with corns through so much layin' about and rubbin' on the sides and ribs of the canoe; so we was never entirely joyful.

"And we got along so slow, too. You will comprehend that the river banks was overhung with trees, and that the river wound itself into tangles, so that the Lootenant conned the launch from her bow, the steersman bein' unable to see beyond. And about every mile there was a tree layin' right across the course which wanted blowin' up. That took time, and we wasn't near Bamango on the fourth day when the Navigator says, 'We've only three days' provisions left, and we must go on two-thirds rations.' I wasn't surprised. I knew it was like this on picnics.

"The stream continued to describe the least straight course it could, and we come across rapids, too. The canoe was generally drove into the bank on the way up, and there we always picked up a cargo of red ants from the branches of the trees. These red ants is the sort that is mostly claws, like

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lobsters, and they prefer to be killed rather than let go an unoffensive bluejacket or any white man. And when you *have* killed 'em their claws still remain, ranklin' like stingin' nettles and prickly pears conglomerated. These kind of ants showed exceptional intellectual powers to lay for us in this way. It wasn't as if the Jujube had a lot of traffic and they lay out on them branches by chance. No. On the opposite, we was the fust that ever bust into it, I should think, and them ants was there specially for *us*. So I conclude, fustly, that word was passed up we was comin', and, secondly, that the ants was quite aware of the way the current set, and judged exactly where we should touch the bank. Else, why were they always at the right spot? Besides, there's plenty of ants have done as clever things as that. But this ain't a science lecture.

"On the fift' day we come across a village. The forest had been very dark and silent, so that it had seemed not right to speak above a whisper. And yet all the while there was a sort of sound like the trees growin' or the insects talkin' soft to one another. At the village it was just the same. The gates was open, and the people was appairiently run away, although the town was not in M'Gooli's country, and they needn't have been afraid of us.

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“‘Give it a hail,’ said the Lootenant to Brum Ward, a signalman.

“‘How do you hail a town, sir?’ says Brum.

“‘Oh, anyhow, so long as you make a noise,’ says the Navigator.

“‘Wot O, within-without!’ sings out Brum.

“No one answered.

“‘Nicky-night, show yer light!’ he calls again. And again no one spoke.

“‘They don’t understand English, I’m afraid, sir,’ he said. ‘The c’rect thing is to wind the bloomin’ bugle horn what hangs upon the portcullis or the starboard drawbridge, and challenge all comers to feets and arms together with excursions and alarums.’

“The Navigator kep’ his eye on the village. The canoe party all had their rifles loaded, with the muzzles over the gunnel ready for events. We landed and had a look round, wary, but saw no living thing till we got well inside the palisades. Then a chap dressed like an Arab comes out of a stone-built house and says, ‘Hush up, she’ve just dropped off.’

“‘Who’s she?’ says our Lootenant. ‘And who are you?’

“‘Ain’t you come for her?’

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“ ‘I don’t know in least who “her” is,’ says the Navigator.

“ ‘Why, that lady explorer what’s been rowt-marchin’ across Africa. I sent down a message about her, and I thought you was the answer.’

“ ‘What’s the matter with her?’

“ ‘Fever.’

“ ‘Stooard, go and see what you can do for her,’ says the Navigator to the sick-bay stooard. ‘And now, what’s this all about? Are you English?’

“ ‘No fear,’ whispers Brum to me, ‘he’s the chief of Ulva’s isle, and she’s Lord Ullin’s daughter.’

“ ‘My name is McCluskey,’ begins the Arab.

“ ‘There you are,’ says Brum, ‘upon the Grampian Hills his father feeds his bloomin’ flock. It’s a cert.’

“ ‘And I am the headman of this village. The lady came here, explorin’ and butterfly catchin’, as I said. That’s a week ago. And she’s had fever ever since. But my wives is lookin’ after her.’

“ ‘But how came you here?’

“ ‘From the Navy. I’ve served my ten. This town wanted a king, and I wanted a dry number, so I took the job. Nine wives and nothing to do, Lootenant! That’s better’n cleanin’ bright-work for her Majesty, eh?’

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“ ‘Depends on the wives,’ says the Navigator, dry. ‘Well, what’s to be done with this woman? Can you send her to the coast?’ ”

“ ‘No, I can’t. All my men has bunked it, afraid of M’Gooli, or else joined up with him.’ ”

“Lootenant Senton turned aside to say a silent thing or two about lady explorers, and then observed that he confounded well supposed he’d have to make a bally call on his bloomin’ way back. It certainly was aggravatin’.

“We re-embarked, the stooard sayin’ the wives wouldn’t let him inside the room.

“On the next day we was put on half rations. It was very irritatin’ to see them niggers in the canoe, what had brought their own provisions, eatin’ all the time and us starvin’. They had a fire on an iron plate, and cooked one thing whilst they ate another. Their legs and arms was spidery, but their paunch was tremenjus, which is also spidery, p’raps.

“That enthusiastic joint of a Navigator would have gone on without food at all, I think, if only the guncotton hadn’t run out on one happy day. We turned, and I was properly glad, although we hadn’t found Bamango. With no obstacles, and with the current, I reckoned we’d be back in two days. The

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fast day's run was satisfactory, and that evenin' we polished off our last provisions.

"Next mornin' the Lootenant says: 'We'll have a treat for our last day. Stooard, we'll make a meal off them medical comforts of yours. Turn 'em into soup.'

"'Everything, sir?' says the stooard, meanin' all his stock of medicines.

"The Lootenant, thinkin' he meant all the comforts, says 'Yes.'

"The medical comforts is brandy and port wine, and jellies and Liebig, and things like that. But this constipated, lower-deck doctor dropped in not only them articles, but lint—which he said would give body to the soup—and pills, and quinine, and zinc ointment, and the whole bloomin' chemist's shop in his medicine chest.

"'Orders!' he says, when we remonstered with him.

"We borrowed some rice from the niggers to thicken the mixture, and I must say it turned out a most influential and nourishin' soup, the best I ever lapped excep' for the thoughts of pills.

"Then we settled down easy for our last day's boatin'. Roundin' a bend just above the village where the lady was, we was brought up by a tree

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layin' athwart the river. Just as we observed it, and also that it hadn't fell of its own accord but had been cut, a hot fire opened on us from each bank, and every nigger what could jumped overboard from our canoe and swam ashore with his paddle. So we surmised they was friends with the enemy. We took away the paddles of them who was left and let them dive overboard too. They got ashore all right, I think, but we hadn't got enough paddles left to force the canoe up-stream, so the steamer cast us a rope and we hauled up the river, firin' at the flashes. Two or three of us was hit, but not bad. We anchored in the stream that night as usual, and I can assure you the sentries was wide awake. Not that a bluejacket can sleep easy when he's standin' up in a boat at any time. Marines can, because they get a lot of practice aboard.

"In the dawnin' we scooped up what we could of the niggers' rice, but it made a terrible short meal, so that we commenced to look at our emergency ration. There's very few men have seen the outside of an emergency ration, let alone the inside. Conceive a tin three inches by four and a half, weighin' eleven ounces in the mornin' and eleven pounds in the evenin'; dark blue; white label. There is the outside. We was familiar enough with

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that. We'd been havin' landin' turn-outs all the year, and carried them blighted tins every time. They had seemed just heavy, useless lumps of lead, nearly as awkward to carry as Wallace spades. But now there was a chance of seein' the inside we started to read the directions again.

"'It's very thoughtfui of Eevan to put up chocolate cream with the concentrated beef, ain't it?' said Brum, fondlin' his tin. 'Which will you start on, Chats?'

"'I shall try the pemmican, Brum,' I said, 'because I've read such a lot about it. The cocoa can wait. But thirty-six hours is a long time for this tinfu to last.'

"'In small quantities, Chats, remember. None of your big helpin's. I wonder what it looks like inside. Has any mortal eye observed since they was packed?'

"'Once,' says I, 'a tin was opened by Adm'ralty orders, and a Fleet-Surgeon reported that one half the contents (which was the pemmican end) smoked pretty fair; but the other half, he said, he couldn't light up at all, and he couldn't, conscientious, recommend it for pipe smokin'.'

"'H'm,' says Brum. 'Any more cuffs about it? Didn't another physician take it for smokeless powder?'

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“‘Excuse me, Mr. Ward ; but do you doubt my voracity?’

“‘No!’ he says, emphatic.

“‘Very well, then,’ I says, ‘don’t be skarcastic.’

“We was nearin’ the tree again by now, and the Lootenant said we must drive off the enemy, and then chop the tree to bits, or else drag the boats round. But we was saved the portage, because the niggers had a Maxim, which certainly was against the rules of the game, and sunk the canoe. So we had to swim ashore in the shelter of the launch. The Lootenant was wounded in landin’, and one or two more; but we beat back the natives and then sat down to think. Here we was, three or four day’s march from the coast in a forest full of enemies. And we had no food. Besides, there was the lady.

“The Navigator called me up. ‘You must take charge of a landin’ party and fight your way to the village,’ he says, ‘after we’ve got the launch round this tree. I’ll take the wounded on her and meet you there.’

“So we done what he said, and met all right after meanderin’ for a while. But the village was burnt, and in the middle of where it used to be was McCluskey—dead. So we surmised that p’raps

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cleanin' brightwork was safer than bein' a king.

"But the lady was disappeared.

"'One more ugly one gone,' says Brum.

"'How do you know what she looks like?' says the stooard.

"'P'raps you think she's a beauty?' said Brum.

"The stooard was done. It was impossible to conceive that.

"'There you are!' says Brum, triumphant. But as he stood grinnin', his face gradually straightened and his eyes bulged. For strollin' into the village there came a lady, a young lady, all glorious to behold, with a butterfly net and other gadgets slung round, and a pistol in her hand.

"'Good-afternoon,' says she.

"Them who could speak answered, and everyone salooted as if she was an Admiral's daughter.

"And Lootenant Senton, with his arm in a sling, blushed extempoar when he thought of the remarks he'd passed about lady explorers.

"But he touched his cap and observed that it was a fine day. And she said, 'Yes, and yesterday was pritty fair.' Then he said he hoped to-morrow would be all right, but she cut in and said:

"'Let's leave this civilised talk, and get on to

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sense, Lootenant'—she said 'Lootenant' just like we do, and not 'Leftenant,' like landsmen in England talk, so I guessed she was American—'I've been out two days on the hills, but I saw the smoke of the burnin', and judged I best come and see after my baggage.'

"'But—er—but—the fever?' stuttered the Navigator, still moony and wonder-struck.

"'Oh, that's gone, like the baggage. Intermittent. Here to-morrow, p'raps. Where's King McCluskey?'

"The Navigator opened his mouth, and couldn't speak. She looked round at us. 'Poor McCluskey,' she said. 'Have you buried him?'

"We done it, and she whittled a board for a headstone; and by that time she had learnt all there was to learn from Lootenant Senton, for she was proper business-like.

"'And what ye doin' now?' she says.

"'We must put the wounded aboard the launch,' says he, 'and the rest of us must fight through by land.' And he offered her a place on the launch. She wouldn't have it at all. So he embarked the wounded, except himself, and he reckoned he'd be happier marchin', with her. But she says 'No' to that. She would be guide, because she knew the

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country, and he must bring up the rare. He pulled a long face, but he done it. I followed her, and we stepped out in single file. All that evenin' she kep' on, and far into the night, till we got on to some open hills.

"What are them flashes across the sky,' says she, callin' a halt.

"'Electric light!' I says. And we all watched for a minute or two.

"'They're signalisin' to us from the ship,' says Brum. And so they was, to recall us. Again and again the same signal flashed, and we couldn't answer. We lay down, dead-beat, and watched them aggravating flashes for a time. But some looked at their emergency tins, and the lady saw them and gathered what they was for.

"'Lootenant,' says she, 'ain't it time we had supper?'

"The Navigator looked doubtful. 'I shall have to explain it all on paper,' he says.

"'Besides, we ain't got no tin-openers,' whispers Brum so's she could hear.

"'And it will look different then,' went on the Lootenant. 'Diggin' into emergency rations means trouble with the Adm'ralty. No one's ever done it.'

"'There's a chance for an original man,' says she.

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And she hummed, 'Port Admiral, you be-damned,' in dulcimer tones.

"'It's only about twenty-four hours more to the coast,' says the Navigator, not stickin' to the truth.

"'Yes, that's all,' whispered Brum. 'It'd be a pity to break open these tins after carryin' 'em so fur and showin' 'em at so many inspections. We really ought to wait for a serious emergency, miss.'

"'Look here,' says my lady. 'Some of you hands'—'hands' she said, quite familiar—'some of you hands build a fire and all of you bring your tins here.' So we done that, and by that time she had persuaded the Lootenant to allow half the tins to be opened.

"And all the while the signals went on, ditto, repeato, as before, till, at last, they changed and said, 'Is that your fire? If so, light two more, one on either side.'

"We done it.

"Then they said, 'Are you in difficulties? If so, put one out.' We did.

"And after that we conversed with 'em, slow, and they got our bearin's, and said they'd send search-parties.

"In the black night we started again, and dived down into the woods, and the lady was the leadin'

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figure, as previous. There was innumerable creepers to trip over, and stumps, and every now and then we bashed into trees. When the lady got an extra bash she swore in the most intoxicatin' sweet way, and then apologised to *me*. I never felt any knocks myself after that. To *me*! Thunder and earthquakes!

"It was better in the daytime, and we crawled on till midday, when she halted us and ordered the last of the emergency ration to be cooked. Ordered, mind! The Navigator was too far gone to argue.

"In the afternoon we shuffled on again, she stepping out lively as ever. And that evenin' we met a search-party, and all our troubles was ended. But the picnic wasn't—quite.

"The Navigator was not nearly finished. The lady came aboard with us, so as to be carried to a civilised port. And she looked after that Lootenant proper, besides the other wounded, till Zanzibar. And there, as soon as she landed, she sent off to the picnic party a couple of bottles of Bass each. And I tell ye, it went down high.

"She came off frequent to see to the Navigator's arm, and to play the piano at church service after that. And one fine day the Navigator went ashore, and the Cap'n and me, and the Cap'n's cox'n, and we met her

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at the Consul's office. The Navigator was the best man in her estimation, and best off in ours ; and she wanted me in it to be witness, because, she said, it was romantic. Her name was Petronella Alexandrina something—and she was 'all that, there's no doubt. Lord ! she was a beauty ! And me and the cox'n struck down some more beer which she had thoughtfully provided ; and the Cap'n said he hoped Mrs. Lootenant would give over her wild ways and settle down steady for the future. And she has, too. She caught a burglar with her own hands on'y the other day, through bein' so domesticated."

AN ADMIRALTY-MADE MAN

AN ADMIRALTY-MADE MAN

“All zeal, Mr. Easy. Zeal will break out in this way ; but we should do nothing in the Service without it.”—CAPTAIN MARRYAT.

ADMIRALTY-MADE men are the very opposite of the tailor-made variety. They are seamen or marines who have been specially promoted for gallantry, and this tale is about one of them. I do not know whether it is true in all its details, but it sounds true. It is certain that the village of Talifafumara was taken, and that Captain John Penultimate Keston, of H.M.S. *Yellowhammer*, took it. It is also certain that Napoleon White, A.B., was “warranted” for his services on that occasion. The papers said that “the advance guard was in imminent peril, when Seaman White, by a brilliant device, and entirely on his own initiative, drew off the enemy, and saved the situation”: which left a deal to the imagination. However, “Chatty” Mather, White’s chum, explained everything.

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"We was at Zanzzy," said he, "when a telegraph come all sudden from Mombasa. My watch had jist landed for three hours' leave, from five to eight in the evenin'. But as the consul's mate at Mombasa was urgent, and the head consul at Zanzzy backed him up, the *Yellerammer* fired a recall gun. We hadn't hardly left the landin' stage, but wid a word or two at things in general, and the British Navy in partic'lar, we tumbled down again to the boats, wonderin' what was up. All except Knocker White, that is.

"When he heard the gun, he says to me, as we hove to, 'Chatty' says he, 'I'm goin' to have my three hours, even if war wid Russia is declared. So good-bye, my young friend.'

"I argued the point for a minit or two, and then, as he was set, I said I'd stop too.

"But he wouldn't have that neither. 'If you don't go at once,' he says, 'I'll go wid ye as fur as the boats, and then I'll bunk it, and be luffed in for mutiny. I'm suffering severe from drought, and now I'm here I'm going to damp it, Chatty. If the bloomin' ship goes while I'm adoin' it, well, she goes, and I'm macarooned like a blasted pirate, that's all.'

"'On'y you ain't on no desit isle, Knocker, and there'll be a warrant sent ashore for you,' I says.

"'Never you mind. Give my best respects to the

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Cap'n and Number One, and shove off.' And he give me a shove down towards the quay, whilst he sheered off t'other way.

"We sailed that 'night, and arrived at Mombasa next day. We didn't know what the telegraphs was about, but we knoo there was war, the Cap'n was so jovial. He'd sing a comic song to hisself as he danced round the poop, or slap Number One on the back, and joke to him like he never used, and maps and charts he lived on. Them signs always meant fightin', so we was glad. We heard that a chief had been raiding down to the back-gardins of Mombasa almost, and we was to go for him. The Cap'n looked a bit disappointed when we steamed into Mombasa Harbour and found the *Suckin' Dove* there, the senior officer's ship. However, he come back smilin' from his state visit to her, so it was all right. He was to go in command of the expedition, the biggest we'd took part in, to rouse out that Arab chief. We sounded off landin' party in a day or two, and joined up wid a party from the *Suckin' Dove*, under her fust lootenant. There was, besides, Soudanese and Askaris wid us; and porters untold and stinkin' in the commiserit department.

"Marchin' off, the Soudanese went fust. Fine men they was, scoutin' and skirmishin' when the

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ground allowed. But mostly we was single file in dismal woods, and the ground did not allow. After them follered the main body of us bluejackets, and tailin' after us was the porters mixed with Askaris. These last is sojers, but they ain't fightin' men like the Noobians—the Soudanese, that is. The extreme rare was looked after by the marines.

“In a day or two we found the rebel chief's village. There was a strong stockade of big tree-trunks round it, and lines of 'bomas' and rifle-pits openin' out on each side of the main gate, so as to command the approach wid a cross-fire. The forist prevented any flank movements on our side, and we simply had to walk up to the front door at once, or chop down trees for a fortnight.

“The Cap'n didn't seem to have no doubts about which he'd do. When the enemy opened fire, the fightin' line found cover and answered it, whilst the centre and rare closed up. Then the Maxim was squirted about a bit, and we give the pits and 'bomas,' which is little stockades, some volley-firin'. That sicked 'em, and their fire slacked off a bit. The guncotton party was ready, jist behind the fightin' line, and when they see this, made a dash for the gate. The gate wasn't on hinges, but was a miskillaneous mixture of tree-trunks, mostly criss-crossed,

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whilst at the inner end was two uprights holdin' up a crowd of horizontal trunks, what had to be lifted out and in one at a time from the inside when the gate was opened peaceful. But now as we was in a hurry, and was outside, the demolition party selected the tenderist spot, planted their guncotton cakes, fused 'em for one minit, and then retired to the coverin' party.

"Bang! Over went them tree-trunks. Almost before they was down the Soudanese and us was through. We and them always raced in promiscuous into any village we attackted, so as to git chickens. They was the best hands at it though. They could catch a chicken and wring his neck while we was surmisin' whether it *was* a chicken. Still there was other things, and we didn't generally starve on 'bare navy' (*i. e.* the Admiralty scale of rations).

"Now in all our previous experiences resistance ended when the gate went down. Naturally we surmised it had this time, but it hadn't, and we was sold a fair dog. This gate we'd bloo down was only the fust one! We got into a reg'lar windin' alley, wid high, close stockadin' on each side, and at the far end was gate number second.

"And them Arabs, or some of the bravist of them, had lined each side of the alley, and, when it was

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pritty full of us, opened fire, fust thoughtfully chuckin' over some tree-trunks and so reconstructin' the gate behind us. We wasn't long in findin' how we'd been dished, and the *Sucker's* Number One, what was leadin' us, flapped round a bit, I tell ye, to find the way out. So did we, but there wasn't none. Then we looked for some soft place to shove through, or a low place to git over. But there wasn't none. What we wanted was scalin' ladders. We kept away from the end we entered, because our own party would be blowin' that up from outside, and we hoped they'd fly round a bit and do it, for we was fallin' fast. Cap'n Bullead of the Soudanese was down, and six or seven bluejackets, besides a good few Noobians.

“ ‘Why the deuce wasn't some of you hands brought up to make livin' pyramids, like the sojers at Alder-shot ? ’ growled the lootenant, after we'd tried everything.

“ ‘I'd like to see 'em do it in their boots in full marchin' order, and in front of a select aujeance of Arabs wid guns,' says one of his own men.

“The lootenant on'y laughed, bitter, and cussed big and large as a bullet smashed his sword at that moment. ‘War, is this ? ’ says he. ‘I'm all on for peace, I am. These blighted, forlorn hopes is scarcely the thing for men of my age and chara'ter.' Then a

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shot went though his helmit, and he invented some more langwidge.

“That was about the last shot fired. For some reason or other, the Arabs’ firing ceased, and we waited cooped up, till at last the fust gate was blowed up agin. They told us afterwards that we was on’y imprisoned for about ten minutes, but when you’re ambuscaded that means a hour or two.

“We was more cautious in chargin’ through the next gate when it was guncottoned, but still, we wasn’t slow. I follered hard on that lootenant what wanted peace. He held his revolver in a most bloody-minded way, and when he see there was no more cool-dee-sacs, and we was fair in the village, he run like blazes through the main street, in the hopes of catchin’ a Arab or two at the back gate. I wasn’t on for sprintin’ so fur as that. Besides, I seen some-thin’ more interestin’ to do. For, reclinin’ in the pathway, on our starboard bow, was old Knocker White, what I’d left behind at Zanzibar !

“I rushed up to him, forgittin’ I’d still got me bay’nit at the charge, glad as anythink. ‘All right,’ he says, ‘you needn’t be in such a blighted hurry to take me prisoner, Chatty. And you can tell that racin’ man, the lootenant, that this village is took.’

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“‘Well, I know that!’ I says. ‘A course it’s took, or soon will be!’

“‘Chatty, I’ve no doubt you rather fancies yourselves as fightin’ men, you and the expedition, but I done this little quiff meself, on me own privit. *I* took this village, and there ain’t no deviation about that.’ Knocker was speakin’ a bit husky, and when he got as fur as this he dropped down flat, in a faint. Then I seed he’d got a shot-hole, and fetches the stretcher party for him, after which I joined in the usual programme, burnin’ crops, catchin’ fowls, and plunderin’ in general. But them Arabs don’t leave much besides their four-post bedstids, and you can’t send *them* home as soovenners.

“Knocker was clear-headed next day when the Cap’n made his rounds, and salooted feeble. ‘Come aboard, sir,’ he says, in a sort of whisper, and wid a flickerin’ smile that might have been the wound twitchin’ his face.

“‘I’ll talk to you later on, White,’ says the Cap’n, speakin’ short.

“So old Knocker says to himself, as the skipper moved away, ‘Fourteen days, 10 A, White, and next time I’ll give you cells,’ just like what he surmised the Cap’n ’ud say when he was well.

“A week or two later, when he was bein’ lushed

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up in the sick-bay on port wine and jellies, and all of us was back aboard, the Beadle, I mean the Crusher, which is the Master-at-Arms, come for him to see the Cap'n. So he went aft for punishment, but found the skipper quite jovial.

“‘Sit down, White,’ he says. ‘What’s this I hear about you frightenin’ away all the garrison of Talifa when they was dishin’ up my advance guard in that blind alley?’

“‘Well, sir, I was a bit “on” at the time, else I wouldn’t a done it,’ says Knocker.

“‘Oh, don’t apologise, White,’ says the Cap’n, laughin’. ‘Come, tell me your tattics from the beginnin’, when you missed the boat at Zanzibar.’

“‘When a commander talks about missin’ boats, and not about breakin’ your leave and 10 A, you feel all right. So Knocker busted off with how that he had a quiet stujious time for a day or two, avoidin’ the police, and then crept down to the harbour one night and persuaded a Arab to give him a passage to Mombasa.

“‘*Persuaded* is a good word,’ says the Cap’n. ‘Go on.’

“‘So Knocker explains that his mother promised him a dictionary on his birthday, and he would study langwidge a bit in the future, but what he

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meant was that there was a dhow castin' off, wid three men aboard, and he jumped in. Then, talkin' like a ship's corporal jist made, he says to the Arab cap'n, 'Got any slaves?'

"'No, sah!' says he.

"'Well, I'm goin' to see you don't git none. Carry on wid that castin' off.'

"The Cap'n and crew simply stared.

"'Oh, I'm goin' wid ye, me Christian friends,' says Knocker, seatin' himself on the gunnel. 'I'm a fust-class passinger to Mombasa, on the look-out for slaves.'

"'But I no go Mombasa,' says the Arab.

"'What's that?' says Knocker. 'You don't eh? Then I hire you and your boat, soopercargo, underwriter, crew, double-bottom, bilge, and signal-halliards for the time bein' in the name of Queen Victoria and Cap'n Keston. There's war at Mombasa, war agin the most holy Sultan and the consul's mate, and I must be there. On and from now, this boat is under martial law. Savvy?'

"He savvied, but said, 'I go Kilifi.'

"'Well, Mombasa's on the way, and that's where I go. Special dispatches I've got, and don't you forget it.'

"'I am a free Arab, sah.'

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“‘Not you,’ says Knocker. ‘Set that lateen, and don’t let me have any more mutiny.’

“He done it, because him and the crew was about mismerised, and in twenty-four hours, on a black night, Knocker landed at Mombasa, recommendin’ the Arab to apply to the Lord High Adm’al, London, for his passage money.

“‘I surmised I wouldn’t go back aboard, sir,’ went on Knocker, ‘not while this up-country picnic was goin’ on. And as it was useless joinin’ up wid the landin’ party, on’y to be arrested and returned aboard wid the empties, I concluded to organise a privit expedition.

“‘I found two porters willin’ to cross Africa on twenty pice a day, on’y carryin’ a little food and a few water-bottles, containin’ beer. I remembered the doctor’s orders, sir, about never to drink impure water, and I couldn’t carry a filter, sir, else I would. So we follered your party up by a side rowt, and most fortunate heard your firin’ on the third day, as we was schemin’ through thick woods. We found the village, and makin’ a datower to get to you, arrived at the back gate jist as the Arabs was bunkin’ out. So we strolled in when they’d finished, and I allowed my brigade to git out of hand a bit, which I won’t deny. The whole two of it fell to

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plunderin'. I picked up a muskit meself, and a chicken or two. I was jist wonderin' where the expedition was got to, when I heard firin' break out agin and go on continuous. So I meandered on towards it, and caught sight of some twenty Arabs calmly shootin' through the stockade. I also heard some "profane oaths, in deregation of God's honour and the corruption of good manners," on the other side. So I knoo some bluejackets was there.

"I loosed off at the nearist nigger, and wiped him across the earhole wid the butt end of me muskit, and laid him out widout a word. I was sorry to take him unawares, but there was plenty of his mates left. I sloshed round at number second, a reg'lar sanikatowser of a smack; but the muskit was old and the fust chap's head was hard, and so the butt end sailed off like a boomerang amongst them marksmen, and roused 'em up a bit. They took one look at me, and, perceivin' they was took in force in the rare, did the disappearin' trick round the houses like one man, but not before some one had planted a bullet in me.'

* * * *

"There, old Knocker spun that cuff to Cap'n Keston. Not in langwidge like that, because he's well edecated, havin' passed the seventh standard;

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but that's near enough. Now, allowin' that he might have been a hoop or two up at Talifa, yet he wasn't exactly drunk, and must be give credit for a very darin' evolution.

"And so the Cap'n thought, for when Knocker was quite well he made a speech one day at Divisions. 'Men,' he says, 'you know me, and I know you. I'm Jacky Keston, I am, and there's no skience about me, no armour-clad trains, nor ice machines, nor luxuries of that sort. I go straight at the enemy and fight him fair, and I admire them who do the same like White here, who I hereby promote to 1st Class P.O. for conspicuous bravery in the face of the enemy.'

"'The rare of the enemy it was, sir,' said Knocker.

"'Never mind, White,' says the Cap'n, laughin'. 'Shake hands. I'm proud to have sich a man on my ship. I've wrote to the 'Adm'al about you, and ast him to forward a recommend to the Adm'alty.'

"Then the band struck up, 'See the Conquero, here he comes,' and Knocker says confidential to the Cap'n, 'Thank ye, sir, but as I shan't be able to hold this ratin' very long owin' to extreme dryness, it would save trouble and expense if you shook hands agin, and called it square.'

"'Nonsense!' says Cap'n Keston, goin' aft.

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“He knoo that what a man does as A.B. he don’t do as a warrant officer, which Klocker was made as soon as the Adm’alty had time to act on the recommend. So now he’s a bo’sun, as steady as they makes ’em.

“But what was the account the Adm’alty got of his manœuvrin’ before the battle I do not know. On’y the Cap’n and Purser knows that, with the Admirals of course. I know that that Purser was marvellous cunnin’ wid words, though, so I expect Klocker figgers in the report as a respectable fightin’ man doin’ tremenjous deeds for the honour of Cap’n Keston and the British Navy, and as sober as a judge when adoin’ of ’em, too. Well, he will be next time, he says, ‘and there ain’t no deviation about that.’”

THE FOREIGNER IN THE FARMYARD

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“Thrift, thrift, Horatio !”

“YOU might think,” said Chatty Mather one day as we walked home together from Whale Island, “you might think, from the yarns I’ve bin spinnin’ ye, that there’s no steady, careful hands in the Navy. But there is.”

“As yourself, for example, Chatty. You own the house you live in, I think.”

“Ah ! yes. But that was giv’ me by a shipmate. And I giv him his.”

“That is a most admirable plan, and would be original were it not for that tale about the washing.”

Chatty looked at me in an old-fashioned way. “You means where they took in each other’s, and lived happy ever after. This is a different case. You know that chap Sharky Fewster next door ?”

I signified that I did.

“Well, I knoo him when I was a nipper. Him

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and me used to live in Tooley Street, by London Bridge, widin strikin' distance of the Gorgonzola stink that's let off under the arches to this day. At night we used to go and get a breath of sea-air on the lee-side of a wilk-stall, which was very refreshin' after them cheeses, and made me think of the blimey ocean. So when I got old enough to work I joined the R.N.; and Sharky, who wanted to be rich, went for a draper's mate down Blue Anchor. I think he was really on'y an arrant boy though, and the money didn't come in fast enough, so he swung it, and followed me to Pompey and the *Saint*.

"But he never forgot his tradin' instincts. You know that on a trooper every bluejacket has a nice grey flannel shirt or two, and sea-boots that look as if they was once Bluchers or Wellin'tons. Gits 'em from the pongos [soldiers]. When the pongo comes aboard he washes his shirt, and hangs it up to dry, and it blows overboard in the calmest of weather. And when he's seasick, a little later, he don't care whether his whole kit goes into the ditch as well. And he says so out loud, too, when the sergeant rousts him out of his bunk. So the happy bluejacket stands to no expense for his underclothin' on a trooper, and that's why the Adm'ralty knocked off runnin' 'em, and laid 'em up. Whenever a matlow's

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got a soft number the Admiralty hears of it, and hoists him out. They sends the sojers by hired transports now.

“ Well, thishyer Sharky wasn’t content wid one or two shifts of clothin’. He used to go rabbitin’ for the shirts of whole rig’ments, and supplied a slop-shop in Portsea to that extent that the Jew what owned it had to tell him to hang on a bit. And he was told on board that he must moderate his zeal, because the colonels was complainin’ their men hadn’t no shirts, and that’s why they caught cold and died in Portsdown Forts.”

“ I should think you didn’t leave much about when Sharky was near,” I observed.

“ Why not ? ” asked Mather, in surprise. “ He was as honest and open as the daylight.”

“ But you’ve just been saying he was continually stealing.”

“ Oh ! Pongos don’t count ; nor sharks [customs officers], nor policemen. If a bluejacket steals from a bluejacket that’s a diff’rent thing.”

I called to mind those ingenuous German tribes amongst whom it was a point of honour to steal from every stranger, but who were strictly honest with fellow-tribesmen. Like Huck Finn, however, I said nothing.

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"On the East Indies Station him and me was together on the *Fearful*, and there he had a donkey, which is a little hand sewing-machine, and was always jevin' [making clothes] for tired members.

"One night we cut down a dhow. It was Sharky's watch below, but he was on deck almost afore they called away the seaboat, and nipped for'ard to see what was up. It was certain the dhow was sinkin', and all hands was watchin' to see her go, and observin' the evolutions of the seaboat takin' off the crew, when Sharky shoves through, lays out on the bowsprit, slides down the bobstays, and docks a big lump out of the dhow's mainsail, jist as she went under. We cheered him as he crawled back, but he said nothink, on'y grinned.

"Next day he was hawkin' round two pair o' duck trousers what he'd made.

"But you're awonderin' what about the houses, eh?"

I assured Chatty I was doing nothing of the sort. The adventures of Mr. Fewster were good enough for me.

"Well, the turnout that giv' me my house and his *was* adventurous. It was at Moocha, on the Arabian coast. The natives had killed off their king, which appears to be a pleasant and usual touch with them,

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and stuck another chap up. But he was too strong a man for us ; had too much savvy, you understand, so the Consul's mate sent in a request. 'Would he be good enough to skip, because we'd got a nice soft young man to take the billet.' He observed in the Arabian tongue : 'What sauce ! No !'

"So the Adm'alty sent a little squadron to Moocha, and as we, the *Fearful*, was the Senior Officer, the Cap'n sent a polite chit ashore the same afternoon as we arrove, requesting the king to slip his cable and sheer off by nine the next mornin', or else he'd blow his bloomin' palace down. And the king said, 'You be damned,' or words to that effect, extendin' over several sheets of paper. So half a company was landed that night to look after the Consul's mate and the Sultan he'd put his money on. Me and Sharky was in that half-company, and we slept in some sheds wid our boots and accoutrements on, and roust out once or twice before the mornin' to stand by the Gatlin's at a false alarm. But nothink happened. The king sent no further chit off, and I don't blame him, and nine o'clock struck from the palace tower, where his flag was flyin'. The Cap'n give him one minit's grace, and then signalised to commence firin'. There was two other gunboats of ours there, and at once they let go a few palliser at the nice

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square tower of the palace, and planted some common shells well into it. It was soon not any more a tower. They wasn't forgettin' the Sultan's guns, a-course, but the Arab gunners wasn't much practised in the art of gunnery, and went off for some other engagement before long.

"Our half-company was fell in in the Consul's grounds, near the palace, but out of the line of fire. We had nothink to do but wait, while Mrs. Consul brought round coolin' drinks, till we seen one or two Arabs sneakin' across the road, and trekkin' off to the hills. The lootenant ordered independent firin'. So we done some.

"But in half-an-hour the firin' nearly ceased from the palace, and we was signalised to assault. There was no resistance whatever. All the lively ones had skipped, and the wounded on'y scowled. So we strolled around to see what we could confiscate.

"Sharky went meanderin' round the harem. The ladies was in the country, you understand, but Sharky guessed that where they lived when they was at home was the best place to pick up things.

"Bymeby the Skipper come ashore, and sees us. He asts the lootenant what he's allowin' lootin' for. So the lootenant, who was walkin' round too, said he was on'y gratifyin' his natural taste for curios."

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"Natural curiosity," I suggested.

"Yes, some sich talk as that. 'After takin' a place by assault,' he says, 'I thought there was no harm in fallin' out the men for a minit or two.'

"'Highly improper,' says the Cap'n. 'Here, come here, you !' he called out to a man wid somethink in his hand. 'Give me that.'

"He took it and passed it back to his cox'n.

"Then we all dodged, but he ordered 'Fall in' to be sounded, and we was relieved of our confiscations, unless they was very, very small indeed.

"Sharky didn't wait to be ordered to drop what he'd got. He came walkin' up bold to the Cap'n, and said he'd found 'this,' handin' him a bangle or somethink like that.

"An Arab was followin' him, and said it was his bangle. Sharky says very likely, on'y he must give it into proper hands. The Skipper passed it to his cox'n, who was a reg'lar panttechnicon by this time, and says to the Arab, 'Call tomorra.'

"So he did, when we was aboard. He said it was a most important bangle, what the favourite lady of the harem had worn for centuries——

"'Is she so old as that ?' ast the skipper.

"The Arab explained that it was a sort of a keep-sake in the family."

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"Heirloom," I suggested.

"Exact. Them's the very words. I knoo it was something to do wid her hair. The Arab went on to say the stone in the heirloom was a charm-stone which would kill any one who wore it who wasn't the Sultana, and very beautiful, and entitled to it.

"The Cap'n looks at the bangle, all glistenin' gold it was, and I wondered at Sharky above all givin' it up, and says, 'There's no jool here.'

"So then the Arab turned a sort of a grey colour and said, 'Please, Mr. Capitan, give me the red jool that was in it. Else my head must be chopped off.'

"The Skipper says he's seen no jool, although he can see there's a socket for one, about as big as a dry haricot bean. He ast the cox'n, and he don't know anythink about it. Sharky's piped, and he says there wasn't one in the bangle when he picked it up.

"'You best go and look amongst the ruins,' says the Cap'n to the Arab. 'It must be there.'

"No, the Arab was quite sure it was in the heirloom when it was on the ground, 'cause he seen it glintin', only the sailorman picked it up first.

"Sharky was indigent, 'You better have my kit and my secretaire searched, sir,' he says, 'to satisfy this gentleman.'

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"So the johndy went through his ditty box and his kit, and looks all about, and can't find it.

"‘I can do nothing more for you, my man,’ says the Skipper, turnin’ again to the Arab. ‘You can have this bracelet when you bring proper orders from the Sultan, but the jool we haven’t seen.’

"So the Arab went over the side as if he was goin’ to a funeral.

* * * * *

"When we dropped the killick at Pompey and was waitin’ to be paid off, Sharky got leaf as soon as possible, and went ashore, as all of us did. But he didn’t go wid us, to taste English beer once more, but made straight for the Public Library, to study. We could hardly believe it when one of his top-mates said he’d seen him. But we pulled his leg about it when he came aboard, and he didn’t say it was a lie. He went ashore again by hisself as soon as he could, and after returnin’ he had a yarn wid me.

"‘You remember Moocha and the Arab, Chatty?’

"‘Yes,’ I says.

"‘Well, the Arab’s here.’

"‘Yes.’

"‘He’s after *me*.’

"‘Is he? What for?’

"‘That ruby!’

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“‘What! you had it after all, Sharky? You completely took me in.’

“‘But not him, that Arab. I got a book out at the library on dimonts and precious stones, so as to git an idea of the value of my ruby. I was porin’ over it for a long time, and then, when I looked up, I’m blowed if that black beggar wasn’t studyin’ it too, from the other side of the table. So I shifted.

“‘The next time, that’s to-day, I made straight for the biggest pop-shop. I giv’ a glance round as I was goin’ up Queen Street, from the landin’ stage, and there he was again. I tried to shake him off all the evenin’, but couldn’t. Reg’lar Sherlock, he is. So I’ve had to come aboard, dished. Now I’m thinkin’ of issuin’ amended instructions, seein’ that the enemy is layin’ close siege. I make a feint at a sortie, and lead him off to the Hill, whilst you make the real attack by takin’ the jool to Hatton Garden. Go direct from the Harbour Station to London, and get a thousand pounds for the ruby.’

“‘Excuse me, Mr. Fewster,’ I says, bowin’ low, ‘but do you think one thousand pounds will be enough?’

“I spoke ironic, but he was in earnest. ‘That’s it, Chatty, talk funny! I looked it all up in the book. That stone is one of the finest waters, and wuth

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£5,000. But git £1,000, and I'll give you fifty. Anythink over, we share.'

"'Course, I took that job on. Sharky had kep' the ruby in a nicky little hole what he kep' for emergencies and heirlooms in the heel of his seaboot. He giv' it me as soon as we arranged about the leaf.

"I found Hatton Garden and I found a old jew-boy.

"He had a look at it. 'How much do you want?' says he.

"'£2,000,' says I.

"He passed it back at once. 'I am not a child,' said he. 'I will gif you £50.'

"'Good mornin',' I said to him.

"He tried to have me back, but I wouldn't argue further wid a rogue like that, except to remark that I'd like to corpse him.

"I found a chap at last, after hucksterin' wid a good many, to offer me £1,500.

"'Make it £1,600, cully, and you shall have it.'

"So he did, and I went back to Pompey joyful.

"Sharky handed over £350. I passed back £300. 'It's no more trouble, old man,' I said, 'than gittin' £1,000, so I on'y takes my wages, and easy earnt they is.'

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"But he wouldn't have it. 'It's all yours,' says he. 'Twelve-fifty's as much as I can do wid. And now I'm goin' to write to the Adm'alty to buy my discharge, and I'm goin' on the pier to git a wife, and I'm goin' in the country to buy some land and pigs.'

"'Farmin' don't pay,' I told him. 'I'm all on for houses, but I'll stroll round the pier wid ye.'

"Sharky set up farmin' durin' his long leaf, wid his wife. I set up housekeepin', too. Not wid any of your half-pay wives, you understand, but one I was properly tied up to. I was strollin' round the pier wid Fewster when I seen her. We walked about a bit, and she told me in confidence that she was the sole heirloom to an aristocracy. So I said, 'That's all right. I'm a sub-lutenant and next on tally for the command of the Channel Fleet.' And she said, 'How nice! how admiringly sootable.' And we both laughed and was married in a day or two. I bought two houses, and we set up in one.

"I was surprised at the end of my leaf on reportin' myself at the depôt to find Sharky there too.

"'Couldn't ye git your ticket?' I says.

"'Don't want it,' says he.

"'What's up then?'

THE FOREIGNER IN THE FARMYARD

"So he telt me. He bought a fine lot of pigs, reg'lar frisky ones they was. But after a week or two, some of 'em got thoughtful. 'Puttin' on flesh,' says his missus. Third week one of 'em dies. 'Swine fever,' says Sharky, feelin' their pulses, and lookin' up his book on *Pigs for Profit*. So he give 'em some coolin' lotion, and sent for the vegetary surgeon. He come, felt their pulses, punched 'em about, and looked at their tongues.

"'Poison,' he says.

"'That's the lotion you giv' 'em,' says Mrs. Fewster, snappy to the old man.

"But the doctor sticks up for him, and says it ain't. He cut up one of the dead pigs, and took some food from the trough, and in a day or two tells him it really is poison. But by that time the other pigs too was gone to a happier land.

"They had a court-martial in the village as to who done it, and Sharky, rememberin' the Arab, ast if anyone had seen a nigger about. Sev'ral had.

"'That's him!' says he. 'That's the blighter! Well, he owed me one, so I s'pose I mustn't complain.'

"He requested the Adm'alty to cancel his application for discharge, and come back to the Navy wid a bad heart agin Arabs.

THE MESS DECK

"One day I says to him, 'Sharky, write your moniker down here, will ye?' He signed a paper I held, widout enquiring anythink about it. I got it witnessed, and said, 'Now number 13, Southick Road is your house, and not mine.'

"He wouldn't have it at first. Said he was a damn fool for goin' in for pigs wid Arabs about, and that I oughtn't to worry about an idjut of his caliber. But my missus managed it through his, and so now he owns that one, and I owns this."

And Chatty let himself in Number 12 with his latch-key, and I followed, into an atmosphere of cooking kippers, to be introduced to the "sole heirloom of an aristocracy," making tea.

GINGE



GINGE

Now Chief M'tumbi rebelled against the Sultan of Zanzibar, and all the inland villages were with him. The coast towns would have been with him as well, only, as they explained, the guns of the English men-of-war had such a devilish long range.

So M'tumbi raided one or two of those towns, just to show that his arm was long also.

Thereupon her Majesty's ships landed small parties of bluejackets up and down the coast at threatened points. The *Tarantula* had already dropped a number of her crew at various places, when an urgent appeal came from Pakumbi, a village seven miles inland. This foolish place had submitted to the Sultan on seeing the warship, being under the impression that naval ordnance carried seven miles. M'tumbi thereupon said he would make an example of that village, and rumour named a day. So the first lieutenant, twenty bluejackets, and a company

THE MESS DECK

of askaris were hastily despatched one afternoon to hold it against the rebel. It was late at night before the force reached the village, because African paths wind.

The following morning at dawn a footsore blue-jacket and some porters reached the coast. The seaman went off to the ship and handed the Captain a note from the first lieutenant, asking for supplies, as he was going to attack M'tumbi in his stronghold, and had only two days' provisions. The Captain cursed zeal and first lieutenants. He wanted those twenty men back within the two days. However, the stores must go. Short, the man who had brought the message, was worn out, and no other seaman could be spared, so the boys were piped to fall in. (Do not imagine, O reader, those cabin-boys of romance. These were strapping fellows, horny-handed, strong as horses.)

"My lads," said the Captain, "I want a couple of you for a service of some danger—to take charge of a batch of porters and convoy them to Pakumbi. The enemy is very possibly in the bush between here and there. Volunteers take two paces forward."

The whole body of boys moved forward eagerly.

"This won't do," said the Captain. "I don't want

GINGE

all of ye. Here, come here, you two!" and the Captain singled out a pair of the strongest-looking.

He gave "Ginger" Casey and "Monkey" Ansell instructions as to what they were to do, told off a Seedie-boy as interpreter, and started them off up-country at 6 a.m.

Casey, being senior, was in command, and headed the column with the guide, while Ansell brought up the rear.

In half-an-hour Casey ordered a halt at a clearing. As the porters came up he explained to the interpreter what a rallying square was. "Now," he continued, "when I shouts out 'Form rallyin' square!' the porters is all to gather up round me and the Brigadier—that's *him*," and he pointed to Ansell, who was entering the clearing.

"I'm explainin' to this intellectual blighter the tattics we're agoin' to adopt in the enemy's country, Brigadier."

"Very good, Field-Marshal. What is they?"

"Rallyin' square on the fust alarm."

"Ginger, you're wastin' your energetics. On the fust alarm they'll bunk it. I shall close up to you, and you'll retire on me, and that's about all the rallyin' square we'll git."

THE MESS DECK

"Brigadier, I believe your right. But what I was really hangin' on for was bacca. Got any?"

"About a pound."

"Monkey, I've a good mind to promote ye. Let's have a pipeful."

And these specially selected boys produced black clay pipes, filled them, and re-started the caravan, smoking voluminously, without giving a thought to their mothers or the Lords of the Admiralty, who had forbidden tobacco.

At about eleven in the morning the party reached Pakumbi, without mishap. The headman of the village handed the boys a note addressed "To Whoever comes up with the porters," which contained an order to remain at Pakumbi until the lieutenant returned.

"That's all right," said Ansell, who was reading over Casey's shoulder. "I hope Flapper don't return for a year or two. I shouldn't mind bein' left like that sentry we used to read about in the fifth standard, what was forgot for centuries, and married and rared a family, and then when the gay young lootenant come back old and a general, went out in his condemned uniform to meet him, and fell on his neck——"

"You don't git me fallin' on Flapper's neck, not if

GINGE

he's a hundred years old and Adm'al of the Fleet, Monkey. But he won't dam well forgit us, so don't you think it."

"I believe ye, Ginge. But ast the king where's he got to?"

The headman said he'd gone to M'timbi to kill the bad men, who did not love sailormen (as he himself did), and therefore deserved to be killed.

"Quite right," assented Casey. "So they do. And look here, old man, if you really love us, pass us some *tambo* (native wine) so that we can turn down a hoop or two to you and the old woman and to any one else your Majesty likes to mention."

The wine was brought, and the two sailors spent the rest of the day in sleeping, eating, and drinking. Towards evening, as there was no sign of the force returning, they held counsel as to guarding the village for the night. The headman said that would be all right, his men would see to that. But the interpreter told the boys privately that the natives were useless as sentries. They got up trees and slept, or they crept back to the village as soon as they were posted anywhere.

"Tell his blooming lordship me and the Brigadier 'll hold a drumhead court-martial on any sentry we find asleep, and hang him immecjut," said Casey.

THE MESS DECK

"No good, sah," answered the Seedie-boy. "We must watch ourself."

"Well, you look after *your*-self, old man. Monkey, we'll take watch and watch."

Everything was quiet till midnight, when Casey called Ansell.

"Anything in sight, General?"

"No, Monk, all's well. Listen, though." A terrible din arose at the gateway. "Some one appears to be tappin' at the garden-gate, now."

"Wid the butt-ends of a few rifles, too. We best go out and see to it."

The knockers were askaris and natives who had gone out with the bluejackets the night before, and now told a tale of a great battle, where they had fought to the death—they were all unwounded—but where finally the enemy had overcome them by sheer force of numbers. The sailor-men were all killed, every one.

"These harriers wants kickin'," said Casey angrily. "That's what's the matter with them. I don't believe there's been any battle. They've took fright over something. Here, Strihey!" singling out a sergeant who was amongst the fugitives, "how many did you kill?"

"Me kill! Oh, ten, nine, twenty, sah. But arm got tired at last, sah, so come 'way."

GINGE

"What was the lootenant doin' then? Where was the bluejackets?"

"They all dead, sah. Ebery man jack ob dem."

"You dam liar! You ran away before the fight started. Let's see your ammunition-pooch."

It was full. Casey cuffed the sergeant down the main street amidst his cowering privates, and Ansell kicked him back again and through the gate into the outer darkness, from whence his howls came intermittently till morning.

But it became clear that a skirmish had taken place, for some slightly wounded men crawled in just before the dawn. They all said the sailors were dead—must be dead, for the foemen were as locusts in number.

As the daylight strengthened the askaris began to drop out of the village and start on the double for the coast. The porters went too, and some of the natives. The boys were quite powerless to prevent the deserters even had they wished to do so. But they were quite indifferent about the matter.

"Well, Ginger?" said Ansell, about six o'clock in the evening.

"Well, Monkey?"

"What's happened, d'ye think?"

THE MESS DECK

"Dunno. Make a reconnaissance t'morra forenoon. It's on'y nine mile, didn't he say?"

"Call it nineteen. It'll take us all day."

"Us? You must stop here and take charge of the stores, Monk. I 'spose Flapper 'll run me in for leavin' 'em to an inexperienced blighter like you, after he ordered us both to remain."

"But he on'y ordered the one in charge to remain, and that's you, Ginge. So I'll do the skirmishin'."

"No, you don't! I'll bloomin' well put you under arrest if you talk to me like that! I'm commandin' officer here, and don't you forget it. I act to my own discretion, and that is, that you hold the fort."

"Don't you think we best let the Cap'n know how affairs is?" queried the beaten Ansell.

"P'raps we had," said Casey grandiloquently. "But I tell you, Monk, I don't want no recall orders. This free-and-easy commander-in-chiefship is a reg'lar dry billet, although wearin' to the brain-power, and I'm all on for keepin' it. Still, we best send him a chit."

So, with infinite trouble, they evolved a note in lead pencil:—"Dear Sir,—'That sounds all right,' said Casey, the author, 'don't it? Sort of brotherly touch about that. One commandin' officer to another'—*me and Ansell has arroved quite safe with the com-*

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miserant apartment, and the provisions is now piled into the chief's house of the village."

"You best add '*safe from the night dews of heaven and the rabbitin' of maraudin' Arabs,*'" said Ansell. "Never be too short in writin' to your friends. They like length, and poetry touches."

"Right you are, Monkey. '*Lootenant Amsteg have not returned, but most of the Askarries has. The sargent reports a battle, and all bluejackets killed. He is a liar. We told him so. And asked him to leave the village, his company bein' demoralisin'. He done it.*'"

"Yes, that softens it off a bit, Ginge. That was a fair lifter though, that last kick, what hoisted him out of the gate."

"Well, that gives all the noos, adjutant, I think."

"You might tell him what we're goin' to do t'morra, general."

"Oh, ah. '*To-morrow I meself will make a r  conisans to see if I can pick up the Lootenant and the rest. I remain, Sir, your obedient, John Casey, Commanding at Pakumby.*'"

"Good on ye, Ginger! Why, there's plenty of chaps in the seventh standard couldn't write a composition so good as that."

"Where's the interpreter?" said Casey calmly.

THE MESS DECK

"Here, Mr. Sali Punka, git me a man to carry this to the Cap'n."

"All gone, sah, 'cep' me," said the Seedie-boy.

"What, every one?"

"Yes, sah."

"Well, take it yourself."

The man was only too glad. When he had gone, the boys were left absolutely alone.

"Now, Monk," said Casey, "we can't guard the whole village. Let's choose a house backin' on the stockade, so that if the enemy comes he can't git entirely to the wind'ard of us."

"You speak like a thorough seaman, your Majesty. The old king's abducted hisself, so I s'pose you *are* king."

They found a house well placed for defence, and passed the night with only one alarm: Casey, in the middle watch, had fired at a figure moving amidst the houses. It had shrieked, but, as the marksman said, it might have been only a hyena. So Ansell, the watch below, went to sleep again.

In the morning they searched for traces of the thing fired at. A trail of blood led to a low part of the palisade. On the outer side of the fence lay a native, dead; but whether friend or foe they could not determine. They let him lie, and went to breakfast.

GINGE

"You best belay that reconnaissance, Ginge," said Ansell abruptly, towards the end of the meal.

"Why-for?"

"That chap's friends will be looking for him."

"Well, if his can look for him, I can look for ours, can't I?"

"But, Ginge, s'posin' you're took, or killed, what about me?"

"You hang on to Pakumbi and the stores, my young friend, till Flapper comes, and says, 'Well done, Ansell, where's that devil Casey?' Then tell him I'm out prospectin' for him and playin' the very Sherlock at tracin' him. See, soften him down a bit."

"Why don't you let this skirmishin' and Sherlockin' swing, Ginge?"

"I can't talk to you no more, Mr. Ansell, temp'ry commandant. Here's for it. So long." And Casey rose in his might, shouldered his rifle, and swung off out of the village.

"Ginge!" shouted Ansell, running after him.

"Yes, my sonner," answered Casey, gaily.

"Ain't ye goin' to shake hands?"

Casey blushed, and shamefacedly and awkwardly went through the ceremony.

It was a long day for Ansell. Nothing whatever

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happened till late afternoon. Then, as he was eagerly watching for the return of Casey, he saw, winding wearily from the forest, a haggard company of bluejackets. Four were being carried, or partly supported, several others were bandaged in rough fashion, and all looked utterly worn out. The lad fired his rifle in the air, threw up his hat, and shouted, "*Tarantulas*, ahoy!" as soon as he saw who they were. There was no response. They filed silently into the village, painfully stooping under the wretched gateway, set down their wounded, and flung themselves and their arms on the ground. Ansell knew that twenty set out. There were now but seventeen.

He asked no questions, but set about making some tea, each man eyeing him impatiently. When they had eaten and drunk a little, some of them had sufficient curiosity to ask him what the devil he was doing there, and where all the villagers were; but the majority were incurious.

After tea, every one but the desperately wounded smoked. Ansell himself had "put on" his pipe, and was just asking for particulars of the expedition, when Lieutenant Amsteg, who was severely wounded, and had been carried in insensible, came-to, and saw him.

GINGE

"Send that boy to me," said he feebly to the nearest man.

Ansell came before him and saluted.

"I saw you smoking."

"Yes, sir."

"What do you mean by it?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Put this boy under arrest, Brown. And fall the men in. We must get back to the ship to-night."

"But Ginger Casey ain't back yet, sir," blurted out Ansell.

"Don't stand there and argue with me, boy."

"But he went out to find you, sir."

"Now, who was sent with those stores, you or him?"

"Both of us, sir."

"You got my order."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I'll court-martial Casey when he comes back. Are the men fell in, Brown?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pick up the wounded then, and march off."

"But——" began poor Ansell again.

"Take that boy away. Put him under arrest, I say. Don't you hear, Brown?"

THE MESS DECK

Petty-officer Brown took away Ansell's rifle and gave it to another man to carry. To be a prisoner on the march was a good thing, especially as the lieutenant generally forgave his men at the end of it. But the man who had to carry the prisoner's arms didn't like it.

"Well, I'm goin' to stop for him, if I git five years for it," shouted Ansell. "He didn't go out on no picnic. He went out to look for you."

Brown tried to stop the boy before he went too far, and suggested to the lieutenant that as the boy Casey had acted to the best of his judgment, he should at least be waited for. Besides, the men were so tired that they could march no farther that night, and perhaps if they camped till morning Casey would turn up. Fortunately the lieutenant fainted just then, and Brown at once gave instructions to remain and hold the village till morning.

Soon after daybreak a rifle was fired outside, followed by a tremendous shout of "Monk ! Monkey Ansell !" and Casey was seen issuing from the wood, driving before him a Swahili, who carried a blue-jacket on his back.

Ansell rushed to meet him. His eyes were brimming over, and he could not speak as he deliriously shook Casey's hands.

GINGE

"Come aboard, sir," said Casey to the lieutenant, who had resumed command.

"Put that boy under arrest too," was the officer's answer.

Casey, used as he was to the lieutenant's eccentricities, looked the least bit surprised, but was soon unconcernedly chatting with the men as to his adventures of the twenty-four hours.

"Well," said he, in answer to a question of Chatty Mather, as to why he thought he was capable of following trails, "well, if the headless horseman could follow a high-steppin' brave of the Mohawks or the Christies over the Rocky Mountains by the lay of a pebble, or the bearin's of a bruised leaf, think I can't foller up twenty flat-feet and a fust lootenant? Why, you leaves a regular book full of instructions behind for any scout I ever heard tell of, let alone old Sherlock. You mustn't think them trappers and dugouts in America is up to more games than me in Africa."

"We don't," said Chatty.

"Very well then. When I come to the fust cultivated fields on the hill above M'tumbi, I lay down and sweated a bit, and thought every bush was lookin' at me wid a rifle or two. For I kicked against the lootenant's watch, all bloody and black,

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layin' in the pathway. I took a good time to git over the feelin' that I was ambushed, but at last I prospected round, and found a battle had took place when you had been returnin'. And the watch was stopped at five minits past three, but it went when I bashed it about a bit——"

"Flapper'll be glad to hear that," said Ansell.

"Then I carefully examined the footmarks, and I seen that the force had retired on M'tumbi, and three pairs of feet wasn't walkin'. So I went on to the burnt remains of the town, not feelin' very good, and came to where you'd camped. Some fresh-turned earth showed prominent, and it came over me that perhaps the lootenant was dead and buried. The footmarks round the camp was very confusin', leadin' out and comin' back in all directions. So I guessed the party had scouted a bit before leavin'. But at last I struck the freshest trail, made by all of ye, less three. That right, Brown?"

"Yes," said Brown, the first-class petty officer of the party.

"So I went moonin' on, not thinkin' of enemies or trails much, but only of who was gone, when all of a sudden I felt myself crucified down on the ground. Some one was sittin' on each arm and on each leg, and a brigade was marchin' up and down my spinal

GINGE

columns. And where my rifle was got to in the hurry I don't know, because some chap was givin' his whole attention towards grindin' my nose into the earth. I was very near choked before they triced my arms up and let me git on my legs agin. When I got the dirt out of my eyes I was able to think clear, but not undisturbed.

"The party what had captured me was made up of seven Swyhilis, or Arabs, and they looked very joyous as they occasionally walloped me wid a withy, or poked me wid a cleanin'-rod, or jerked the line round my neck jist to make me rare up. When they left me alone for a minit I spent my time in devisin' noo and profane names to call myself. For a chap to organize a rescue party and then git took himself seemed about the most foolishhest thing that ever happened."

"There's no doubt," said Chatty Mather.

"Jes' so. There was nothink like it in all my readin'. None of Sherlock's cases was any good to me, and Fenimore's didn't seem practical. I couldn't eat away my lashin's, because my arms was made fast from below the elbow to the wrist, behind my back. And every now and then some lively member giv' me to understand that he had his eye on me, as I said jist now. So I got pretty gloomy till I heard distant

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firin'. But these chaps heard it too, and dived into the bush wid me, whilst a couple of 'em went on to make a reconnaissence.

"The firin' ceased after a while, and the two skirmishers returned a long time from that, wid the information that the others seemed to like. So we formed up agin, and marched for an hour or two to a clearin', where we halted, and the niggers collected several things belongin' to the ship. It didn't want much reasonin' to infer that there'd bin a fight. And by the fact that there was a belt and ammunition-pooch, a bayonet and a serge frock, and other Navy articles left behind, I reckoned you chaps had gone on in a bad way, although you must have beat off the ambuscaders, else they'd have swept the field of battle pritty clean.

"The niggers built a big fire in the clearin', and I lay and watched, and wondered where they belonged to. They didn't seem to have no relations wid the Matumbies, else they wouldn't have been so surprised at the firin'. I surmised they was perhaps cannibals, when I seen how large 'the fire was gittin', and I must say I felt like reportin' myself unfit for dooty. That's the worst of practisin' the imagination it goes further than you want it."

"It doos," said Chatty Mather, who knew.

GINGE

"But then I remembered that cannibals lived on the other side of Africa, by the Congo or the Niger, wid the tiger, like the song says. So I was glad I wasn't in the West Coast Division, round there.

"Bymeby the Arabs had dinner off a goat or some such animal, and then they had a go at *tambo*. But they didn't give me none of either, and I was that full of pain and sorrow and hunger and thirst, that I begun to wish I was dead and kep' a beershop.

"The dusk came on, and one chap rolled me over to see to my lashin's. He tautened the grass-rope round my neck and tied me to a tree. Then he lay down to sleep wid the rest, and all was quiet for an hour or two. I dropped off at last, and dreamt I was a nipper and a big boy had stole my comforter on a winter day; and then I woke up to find the cord round my neck loose.

"I moved my head, as well as my stiff neck would let me, but a whisper came, 'Keep still, ye young blackguard.' So I stopped quiet. It was Bill Coram's voice. I thought you was all come to rescue me, and I was a bit disappointed to think the lootenant would have a fair excuse to run me in this time, not on'y for leavin' my post, but for givin' him all this trouble for nothink. I had a good mind to tell Billy I refused to be rescued, because the ship's company would

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never stop pullin' my leg about it, but by this time he'd cut through my arm-ropes.

" 'Now,' he whispers, 'creep away after me.'

"I done it for a mile or two, and then I said, 'Hang on a bit, Bill, where's the rest?'

" 'I dunno,' says he. 'Come on.'

"I couldn't onderstand this at all, so I went after him some more. Then, as he didn't show no signs of stoppin', I says to him—

" 'Bill Coram, air you a champion at this all-fours sprintin'? Because I ain't, and I absolutely refuse to crawl any further like it.'

" 'Come on,' he yapped, 'else I'll clump ye.'

" 'You appears to me to be practisin' for a carpet-layer, Bill. You don't seem to have no plan of operations in your head, except to git away from seven niggers.'

" 'There's a whole army,' he says. 'Hurry up.'

" 'Not me,' I said. 'There's seven, and on'y seven. And they've got my rifle amongst 'em too, now I come to think of it, and the lootenant's gold watch. I'm not goin' to have my pay stopped for a year to pay for that gun, so you needn't think it, Bill. You stay here, while I go back for it.'

" 'Don't be a blinkin' young fool,' says he.

"But I went about and got to the camp again.

GINGE

The niggers was still asleep and sweetly dreamin'. The chief, wid my rifle hugged to his chest, was unfortunately close in to the fire. But I confiscated a broad-bladed penknife about a foot long from one of his friends, and manœuvred in towards his majesty, when all at once a yell went echoin' all over East Africa, and Billy Coram came slashin' round wid the butt end of his rifle on to a chap's head. The rest of the campers was miles off in about two shakes of a lamb's tail, rubbin' the sleep out of their eyes, and wonderin' whether the millennium had come."

"What's that?" said Ansell.

"It's the same as the armagatherium, 'The last great fight of all.' But my friend the high chief didn't vamoose. I was on to him jist as William done his war-dance, and it was as well, because that was Bill's latest effort, and I wanted a porter to carry him. He fell down onsensible by the side of the man he had bashed. So I gathered up some goat's meat and some *tambo*, and passed a grass rope round the chief's neck, and requested him to hoist up Coram, and lead the way to Pakumbi. He understood some of what I said, and started in the right direction, as I could see by the stars, but in half-a-mile I halted him, and we lay-to in a small clearin'

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till mornin', so that I could observe flank movements easier.

"I eat and drank, and chafed Billy for a long time, in the night, and got a little *tambo* down him at last. Once he come-to, and thought he was aboard and I was the doctor.

" 'Doctor,' says he, lookin' at the stars, 'my sight's gone dicky. I know there's on'y three electric lights in this cursed sick-bay, but I can see millions of 'em. And yet it's all so d——d dark.'

" 'It's night, Bill,' I said.

" 'And why ain't I on deck?' he shouted, fierce. 'It's light on deck. This is a cussed coal-bunker they've stowed me in.'

"I thought all the natives for miles round would have heard him, and was glad when he dozed off again. I kep' awake shiverin', wid my rifle at the ready, for a wearin' time.

"Then he come-to agin, but in his right mind. And he was able to eat a little meat and drink some more wine, and whisper to me what had happened. He told me there had been a fight at that clearin' when the force was retirin' from M'tumbi wid their wounded. He'd forgot all about the fust ambush, but he remembered the charge in the second, and how he got a whack on the head in it, that rolled

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him under a bush where he was lost to both parties. He woke up in time to see me escorted into the clearin', and unloosed me in the way I told you. But what wid the tap on the head and two days' starvation he was quite done up, and in the mornin' I got my prisoner to carry him again, and here we are. And now tell us all about your evolutions, Chats."

"They ain't so artistic as yours, Ginge. About one bell in the middle watch that first night, just as the watch below had found a soft bit of dirt to sleep on, Number One roust us all out and passed the word that as the Matumbies wasn't comin' to attackt us, we must go and attackt the Matumbies. Now we'd on'y arrived at Pakumbi two hours before, and any one but Flapper Amsteg would have waited a bit later than midnight for an assault."

"He would," said Casey, speaking judicially and as a tried leader.

"We done a moan and fell in, and he told us we was goin' to be a particular service squadron, and was to be all fast cruisers wid Belleville boilers and all the latest quiffs, and if any one hadn't got his engines oiled up and ready for forced draught and triple expansions, he best drop out.

"So Jim Short remarked he got blisters on his feet, and swung it, thinkin' he was goin' to have a lay in.

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But he had to take the porters and despatches back to the ship, all by hisself, so he was wuss off than we was.

"Then Flapper said of course if any one was shot or speared he must lay where he fell, because else we couldn't surprise the village if we waited for little things like that. How the devil he expected to astonish a village when the villagers met and speared us on the way we could not understand. But objections like that he considers triflin'."

"Certn'y," said Casey.

"Just as two bells was strikin' we marched out of Pakumbi, followed by a company of askarries and a lot of natives, and we reached Matumbi widout sightin' a soul. Old Jamaica was just rollin' up in his usual place to the east'ard when we entered the village, and found it deserted.

"So we posted sentries, lit fires, and had breakfast. After which we burnt the town and destroyed crops. In the middle of the afternoon we started back, pretty careless.

"We was smokin' and chattin', wid our arms slung anyhow, tailin' over the bare shoulder of that hill near the village, when we heard a witherin' volley on our port quarter. Us bluejackets was leadin', and the askarries and native contingenk was behind,

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where the firin' was. Before we could quite take it in, the bush opposite us was spittin' out bullets, and Number One shouted, 'On the knee! Don't fire till I give the word!' He was stalkin' up and down the footpath as calm as if he was on Whale Island, whilst the bullets was hissin' round fit to scare any one wid a bit more imagination than him. I was beginnin' to wonder whether he'd ever give the word to fire, when I heard the other end of the line begin. So my end all let off at any bushes where flashes come from. No natives showed a whisker. Flapper was very much upset at the independent firin', and rushed up and down threatenin' death and destructions to all them that didn't cease firin' at once. So them that was near him hung on while he stood over 'em, and let off when he rushed to the other end of the line. Then he threatened to clump Bill Coram, which was coming much nearer home than talk about death and destructions. So Bill ups and hands him his rifle, butt-end fust, and bowin' low, 'You best take this then, sir, it ain't no good to me.'

" 'Put this man under arrest, Brown,' says Flapper.

" 'Can't spare a man to carry the gun, sir,' says Brown.

" 'What the lootenant would have done, I don't

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know, but at that moment firin' broke out in the bushes behind us, and a bullet knocked him over and he lost his conscience.

"Brown immediately shouted, 'Form rallyin' square,' and him and George Meeson held up their rifles for centres. We formed up round 'em, and then noticed that two of our chaps was layin' out on their faces. So we fetched them in.

"But we made rather good marks for the enemy, gathered up in bunches, and Brown seen it as soon as the rest of us. So we slowly retired on Matumbi, which was not infiladed by the bush like the spot we was on.

"We had a bad night, although the enemy only made one feint of attackin' us, and in the mornin' Brown called up Meeson and me, and we three held a council of war.

"We'd only brought one day's provisions, and they was eat, and what little extry ammunition we had had disappeared wid the porters. I might say that they and the askarries and the natives bunked it at the fust discharge——"

"We'll kick that sergeant some more," said Ansell.

"But as we never reckoned on them," continued Mather, "we didn't miss 'em except for the cartridges,

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and as guides. So we spent the day in scoutin', to find a new way back. In the afternoon two chaps said they'd struck on a good path bearin' correct, so we determined to try it the next day.

"That evenin' Tom Piper died, and in the middle of the night we buried him, wrapped round with cocoanut-matting, because we hadn't brought blankets.

"In the mornin' early we took up the lootenant, who had come-to, and the other badly-hurt chap, and started on our journey back. Meeson took the advance-guard, fightin' line, skirmishers, supports, and all the rest of it, and went scoutin' on in front. That was three men. Then came the main body under Brown: six efficient fightin' men. Me and two others fetched up the rare, and I don't know that we enjoyed ourselves. We'd bin feedin' on mangoes and maize for the whole day before, and was takin' a try at bananas on this one, so we didn't feel what you might call in form."

"No," said Casey, "you ought to take care of your feedin' in campaigns. That's what wins battles."

"Just so. We crawled on for a hour or two widout meetin' any one, and begun to think we'd got to wind'ard of 'em, when widout a word the man in front of me dropped, an arrow in his heart. I

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dived for a tree, and so did the other chap formin' the rare-guard. We waited a second, and looked everywhere about, but all was still. So I fired my rifle at random, to call the attention of the main body. And that seemed to wake up the forest on ahead. We could hear the centre and front engagin'. We picked up Henshall and lugged him along, expectin' every minit to be served like him. But all the fightin' was in front, and we joined the main body in a clearin'. The skirmishers had fell back, or rather the centre had closed up, and Brown was just sayin', 'We must charge 'em, my lads,' when we arrove. So we dropped our man and dashed at the bush wid the rest, leavin' our wounded in a heap in the middle of the clearin'. And I'm blowed if old Flapper wasn't tryin' to shoot off his revolver. Only he was so weak that he couldn't pull the trigger."

"Good old Flapper!" said Casey the magnanimous.

"We thoroughly frightened the niggers by that charge, and they sheered off for a time. But we had another chap to carry now, and Bill Coram was missin'. We buried the dead man in the clearin', and staggered on again. We seemed to have marched about sixty miles, and was sick faint.

"I don't mind rowt-marchin' in reason,' at last

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says one, 'but I entirely objects to walkin' across Africa.'

" 'Well, Commander Cameron done it,' I says, just to start an argument and keep up spirits.

" 'P'raps he wasn't clemmed,' says he. 'On banyan-days I prefers to lay-to.'

" 'We'll do a bit of layin'-to and fallin'-to when we gets to Pakumbi,' I says.

" 'I expect Pakumbi's took,' he answers.

" 'You're an enthusiastic sort of a joint to bring out on a picnic,' I says. But it come across me and Brown that p'raps Pakumbi *was* took.

" So we buckled to agin, desperate. And I must say that the chap who'd bin moanin' worked as hard as any of us. He only wanted to let off steam when he spoke. But for the rest of the journey we tailed along quiet, breathin' hard and expectin' ambushes everywhere. We got one or two stray shots, but no one else was hit. As we neared Pakumbi firin' ceased altogether, and we was very glad to hear Monkey's shot. But we was too fagged and heart-broke to answer, and simply crawled in and slung ourself's down, while he made tea; eh, Ansell?"

" You was a most ungrateful crowd," said Ansell.

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THE MESS DECK

"Brown!" called the first lieutenant.

"Sir!"

"Come here. I've been thinking of those boys. They're young and inexperienced."—"There's a blighter for ye!" whispered Casey.—"I'll let them off this time."

"Yes, sir," said Brown.

"Give them back their rifles and fall the men in. Tell the boys to be more careful for the future."

"Yes, sir."

"And remember always to be considerate to the men under you, Brown. It's the only way."

"Exactly, sir."

"So tell them we'll say no more about it. But they mustn't disgrace themselves again."

Brown almost forgot himself, but bit his lip and said, "No, sir."

As soon as possible after the party reached the ship the indignant petty officer gave the captain an account of the boys' doings. The Captain thanked him, laughed over Casey's letter again, and in a few days, when the two boys were eighteen, they found themselves ordinary, able-bodied, and leading seamen, all in one day, and were entirely unable to understand why the Captain behaved in such an extraordinary way.

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"They'd have been made sergeant-majors in the army," said Mather. "I really think that chap Casey is like the bloke in the fairy story, he ain't shuddered yet."

"Well, you haven't ast me to, Chats," said Casey, overhearing. "I s'pose you means you would like to wet my killick."

"I do," said Mather, ever ready. "English ale, Ginge, English ale."

"Very good, Chats. Next time ashore."

"Hello, Ansell," shouted Mather. "Does Number One allow you to smoke now? Are you goin' to shudder? Ginge is."

"Well, I surmise that what'll make him shudder 'll shake me to pieces. What's goin' to do it?"

"I'm the motive power, Monk. 'Shudder' is Irish for——I dunno, ast Ginge."

A FIGHT IN THE DARK

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THE simplicity of the sailor is eternal. That is why, when the publican lends him a pound on Thursday, the sailor pays back five-and-twenty shillings on Friday, and believes that *he* has been favoured. That is why Nick Murphy, Sixer Ward, and friends, bluejackets, saw the fairness and transparency of the three-card trick on the Paramatta race-course near Sydney, and were almost "cleared out" without knowing how. Then a petty officer came up and explained how.

"Lend us half-a-sovereign," said Murphy. "We'll prove it."

"Thanks," said the petty officer, with a certain coldness.

"By the blessed angels in heaven, chum, I'll not rest till I'm sure. Besides, it's a loan."

With his half-sovereign in his hand and Ward by his side, and with a plan of operations agreed upon, Murphy watched. If a bluejacket placed his money on the correct card, some simpleton was sure to cover

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another card with a larger amount, whereupon the manipulator returned the money of the innocent bluejacket, because, said he, the rules of the game required him always to accept the biggest bet. But if money were placed upon the wrong card no one interfered to cover it, and the sharper pocketed it, advising the victim in a tone finely flavoured with commiseration to try again.

Murphy made absolutely certain of his card at last, and placed the half-sovereign upon it. Immediately one of the card-sharping gang placed a sovereign upon another card, and also immediately, Murphy scooped up the thirty shillings and the dealer. Murphy was larger than the dealer. He turned him upside down and shook money out of him for a while. Then he felt in his pockets to get any that might be left. He didn't do it as easily as it reads. The sharper was a strong, active man, and fought tooth and nail. His friends made a rush to rescue him, but the bluejackets, who had been warned by the petty officer, formed a close ring and beat back all comers. They did not interfere with Murphy's private fight, but when it was finished each man recouped himself from the wealth upon the grass, and any civilian who was known to have suffered was repaid. There was a certain amount

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over even then, which was taken for the common good.

The police strolled up finally and the sharpers slunk away. The police warned the bluejackets to be careful of venturing near Larrikin Point, because, said they, "the chief of that gang is the king of Larrikin Point. He will remember you."

The bluejackets did not think much more about him that day, except to drink his health. They made a most happy boatload on returning to the ship, and the officer of the watch discreetly looked the other way.

Murphy and Ward lingered at the gangway after the rest had been ticked off and had gone forward. Ward was a Cockney, and the friendship between him and Murphy, an Irishman, was unusual, but very real. (As a fact they both went to the same Board school in Southwark. Murphy had only seen Ireland during the manœuvres at Bantry Bay. But this is a secret.) They stood supporting one another and blinking solemnly at the corporal of the gangway.

"We are purrfectly sober," said Murphy, as if answering an accusation.

"All right," said the corporal, "go for'ard."

"I demand to see the officer of the watch," said Murphy indignantly.

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"I demand the officer of the watch to see me," said Ward, "and I request to be medically inspected all over. If the biggest part of me is not drunk——"

"Dhrunk!" said Murphy, who had practised the Irish language, casting off his friend. "Look at me!" and he attempted to stand on his head. "You can't do that, y'know, not widout you're sober," said he to the ship's corporal. "Don't confuse me wid him, on your peril."

"Don't act the goat, Murphy. Go for'ard," said the corporal.

"Not till I've seen the officer of the watch," said Murphy, sitting on the deck.

"Yes. Bring us the officer of the watch," said Ward, sitting beside him. "Think *he* don't know what it is to be drunk? He can certify that me and Nick is not even in drink. We ain't even tasted water since we beached."

"You have been drinking, Sixer," said Murphy. "Don't consociate wid me."

"If you two want to see the officer of the watch, come aft," said the corporal in despair.

"Now you're talkin'!" said Ward, scrambling to his feet, followed by Murphy. They stood respectfully at attention when the officer approached them

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on the quarter-deck, and repeated the formula: "We are perfectly sober, sir."

"Very well, come and tell me to-morrow," said the officer. "See that they tell me to-morrow," he continued to the corporal.

"Very good, sir."

"That's all right," observed Murphy, going forward. "Whenever you're sober, Sixer, like now, get witnesses to prove it. Lootenant Howitzer knows a sober man when he sees him."

Next day the two friends were surprised to find themselves in the report. "What did I say to him?" asked Murphy to the corporal.

"Said you was sober."

"Sixer too? Did he say that?"

"Insisted on it."

"Then there's no doubt we was just about full up."

The two explained to the officer the circumstances of their fall, and he dealt gently with them.

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Next time general leave was given, Murphy insisted on "something quiet." Whereupon Ward suggested a Chinese gambling-house, and led some half-dozen bluejackets to the Chinese quarter.

"D'ye mind that green-grocer's shop?" said Ward,

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as they passed along a street. "That's the place. Come along, don't stare at it."

The group left the street, and Ward instructed the seamen to pass through the green-grocer's shop at intervals, in ones and twos.

Within half-an-hour the bluejackets had done so, and were grouped behind the shop by a strong door. Ward had been to the place before, and was able to satisfy the door-keeper as to his companions. The door opened, and the seamen followed Ward along dark and devious passages to another door. The keeper of this also passed them through, and they came on an open courtyard. Across this they filed to a separate one-storied building where the gambling tables were. One more strong door was passed and then they came on some score of gamblers, sitting or standing round a central table in a smoky saloon. Half were Chinamen, and half white men, larrikins. The bluejackets remained for a little while bunched together, but the gamblers resumed their game after a glance at the new-comers, and the seamen soon spread round the table and joined in the game, which was of the usual simple character. The banker—a Chinaman—placed a heap of small Chinese coins on the table, and covered them with a basin. The gamblers then placed their

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money on Zero, one, two or three, or on combinations. The basin was raised and the coins counted into groups of four, and according to the numbers in the last heap the speculators lost or won. If the money divided out exactly into fours, Zero won.

The bluejackets were fascinated, and were soon deep in "fantan," and only Ward noticed the entrance of two more larrikins, one of whom was the card-sharper, the King of Larrikin Point.

The King recognized Ward, and noted that he and his friends were twice as many as the bluejackets. He scowled, and nodded at Ward with a look on his face as if he were saying, "Now I have you."

"Look up, Nick!" shouted Ward across the table. "Here's the King come to see you."

Murphy turned. He caught a glimpse of the larrikin, and was rising from his stool to face him squarely, when the lights went out. There was a chink of money as though the table was being swept, a scuffling, a slamming of doors, and over all the voice of Sixer Ward, "To the wall, lads!"

Then a deep, solid silence fell upon the place. The windows were strongly shuttered, so that no atom of outside light came in. The darkness was thick, palpable. No one breathed aloud. Each man shrunk against the wall, with a sinking of heart

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and stomach, and held his breath for, to him, an infinite space of time.

Then a gentle rustling arose, mingled with a few ominous sounds, as though knives were being drawn and opened, or revolvers taken from pockets and cocked. But the rustling was more than that. Each man was feeling for his neighbour. If a blue-jacket felt serge he was relieved, and drew near it, knowing it covered a friend. But if he touched cloth or other material he shrunk back as if it were poisonous. Unhappy was the seaman who felt an enemy on either side, as Murphy did. He knew the King must have backed to the wall near him, and suspected that he was on his immediate left. Murphy had no weapon whatever. He wore his lanyard, and should have had a square-headed clasp-knife attached, as per Regulations. But a knife is heavy, and he kept his in his ditty-box, or with his working suit. He regretted the habit now.

He flattened himself against the wall and went through agonies for a few moments. He had a vivid imagination, and the darkness encouraged it. He saw quite plainly an outstretched sinewy arm: he saw the downward stroke of the bowie-knife: he felt the knife, like red-hot metal, rake his entrails.

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A cold sweat covered him, and he closed his eyes, shuddering.

A distinct click on his left brought him swiftly back to reality. Quick as lightning he sank on his haunches, and with tense muscles and alert senses waited, like a tiger ready to spring. The larrikin on his left had touched his sleeve and knew him to be a bluejacket, and he feared that the man was possibly going to fire along the wall at his body. His fears were well grounded, but the bullet passed over his head. A scream showed that it had hit some one.

In a moment Murphy sprang upon his man. With one hand he seized his wrist, in time to deflect a second shot upwards into the ceiling. With the other hand he firmly gripped some of the man's clothing, and exerting his strength, swung him up over his head and smashed him forward and downward with deadly impetus against the heavy gaming-table. The poor wretch gave one breathless grunt, and then lay silent.

The seaman drew back to the wall, panting. The intense terrifying darkness still prevailed, but the silence was broken by the sobs of the man who was shot. No one moved from his place. To speak would be to indicate one's exact position; to strike a match would be to set up oneself as a target.

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Only Murphy knew what had happened, allowing that the smashed man was unconscious, and the struggle had but added to the fears of the men round the walls. They had no idea previously that darkness could be so awful, so thick. A black night was light by comparison.

The minutes passed and seemed like hours, but at length the door of the saloon was cautiously pushed open until a pencil of light entered from a candle placed upon the floor. The men on whom the light fell moved away into the shadow. The Chinese attendant had no wish to be shot, and waited round the corner, until he was hoarsely commanded not to be afraid, but to come in and light up. He did so at last, keeping a wary eye on the company for the least sign of further fighting. No one wanted to fight. It was a larrikin who had been shot, in the arm. It was the King of Larrikin Point who lay by the table in a heap, with a rib or two broken. The remainder of the white men, larrikins and sailors, remained ranged by the walls, haggard and anxious. The Chinese gamblers had all found their way out of the room when the lights went out, as had also the banker and attendants. The banker had turned the lights out himself, in fact, when he saw impending trouble. He had

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removed himself and the bank just as neatly and promptly as he was used to doing in police raids.

The gas was lit again, and the bluejackets and their opponents sorted into two groups and sulkily regarded each other. Then Murphy whispered, "Sixer, I surmise we best retire."

"So do I," said Ward.

"Then file out, lads," said Murphy aloud.

The seamen backed out, Murphy last. The larrikins made a movement as if to follow up the retirement. The bluejackets stopped. So did the Australians. Finally the sailors passed through the greengrocer's shop and gained the open street, and those particular six or seven men were perfectly sober on returning on board.

"Let's see," said the corporal of the gangway, sarcastically, "you like to report yourself to the officer of the watch, don't ye?"

"Not to-day, thank you," said Ward.

* * * * *

"They couldn't bring it in as murder, Sixer, could they?" asked Murphy that night of his friend. "Not even if he died?"

"'Course not," said Ward. "Self-defence, they could bring it in, or justifiable manslaughter. But he ain't dead. These larrikins is everlastin'."

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"I don't think much of your quiet evenings, Sixer."

"More don't I. But don't worry, Nick. 'The king never dies.' I can remember that much history."

The king did not die. He and his friend soon became convalescent, and able to allow themselves that gentle exercise which consists in interfering with other people, and which is so necessary and invigorating to the larrikin or Hooligan constitution. Solitary seamen who ventured near Larrikin Point or into the Domain after dark were sometimes wounded and sometimes killed, and always robbed. Now-a-days the Navy knows those places, and does not go to them except in force.

CHIPS

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“The infinite abuse and prejudice the King has in all or most of his yards under colour of chips is intolerable. . . . A great quantity of wood is carried away by workmen when they go to breakfast, at dinner-time, and at night, under colour of chips: they cut up good timber and call it chips.”—*State Papers, Charles I.*

UP to comparatively recent years the workmen in Government Dockyards were allowed chips. Every day cartloads of firewood and shavings left the yards for the workmen's houses. At the gates the loads were carelessly glanced at and occasionally probed by policemen, but fire-irons, copper kettles, and other household requisites made in Government time with Government property were continually smuggled out in those carts “under colour of chips.”

During the Crimean war, when the yards were working night and day, when women and children came and went with meals almost as they chose, and general confusion prevailed, great things were done “under colour of chips.” Whole houses,

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whole streets of houses, were built directly or indirectly of stolen Government property, and to this day a certain suburb of a naval port is known as "the Crimea," and the floors of its dwellings are of teak. It is unnecessary to say that teak is above the average, so to speak, for flooring. It is not cheap unless one gets it for nothing. Still, morals had advanced somewhat from Charles the First's days. Then every one stole, and the heads of departments most of all. But in this century no one suspects the heads of departments. Huts were built in Charles' reign to store the plunder. Things weren't quite so systematic as that in the fifties, and yet—there are those houses.

Now-a-days there are no chips to be had. A workman dare not carry away a splinter of an abnormal size in his finger. Except perhaps at Snooky, a snug little dockyard town abroad. And not even there. The system is different. But the boatswain says the result is the same. He says this town of Snooky is inhabited almost wholly by dockyardmen, and that the "leading hands" are the aldermen of the town. "Very good," he'll continue, pausing to let the significance of that strike home. "Now the Admiralty condemns a vessel. By the Admiralty at Snooky is meant one of these leading hands. The

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vessel is dismantled and the hulk is put up for sale, and the public, which is these leading hands again, buys it, without too much bidding one against another. There was a case where the Admiralty condemned a vessel, which was bought up by the Admiralty in this way. Into the shell the Admiralty immediately smacked some boilers, and then beat up for some engines, and in a month, sir, they had 'em fitted, and hired that boat out to the Admiralty, which was themselves, always themselves, as a lighter.

“But that's not worse than a staff-commander I did a commission with. I was at Greenwich School with him as a boy, and he was a smart boy. You'd have thought he had a furniture warehouse now he was a man, the way he made his carpenter's crew work at chairs and tables and bookcases and brackets. Every man Jack in the carpenter's crew was a cabinetmaker or French polisher, and the chief carpenter's mate, who was in charge, was a fair artist at Chippendales and old oak.

“We went to and from Malta all that commission in the *Sutler*, which was a store-ship. We had to keep Malta provisioned from Deptford Victualling Yard. And every time we came home, the captain, which was Staff-Commander Bills, sent ashore

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furniture and called it oranges. You never saw such a man. But it was long ago, d'ye mind, in the days of staff-commanders. He hadn't a large family to wear it out either, hadn't Captain Bills. But he *was* poor. And honesty hadn't reached the pitch it has now.

"But the Admiralty, the real Admiralty I mean, revised the regulations one day, and the *Sutler* had to carry a carpenter instead of a chief carpenter's mate. The chief carpenter's mate was a mild man and did what he was told. Besides, he was a petty officer, and liked furniture-making.

"They appointed a *young* carpenter, just made, a man who knew his work and the Regulations about it; but a trifle obstinate, my boy, and not commodious. What was right was right, he reckoned, without regard to the variations of the compass, or the obliquity of the ecliptic, and even without respect to superior officers, which is a crime in the Navy. But there was no doubt he was a skilful shipwright, and a proper ship's carpenter."

And then the boatswain went on to tell what he knew. But there were circumstances in the case which he did not know, and the gunner was no hand at spinning a yarn. So I spoke with the carpenter himself. I would have liked to have

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interviewed the staff-commander after that, but he is dead. Sitting in the warrant officers' mess then, years after the event, the facts look like this—

The first thing that young carpenter did was to make a survey. He told the Captain he found plenty to be done.

"Don't worry about it, Mr. Armstrong," said the Captain. "Don't wear your crew out."

"No, sir," said the carpenter. "But I'll have this ship in repair before we return from Malta."

"I have not complained of her condition," said the Captain.

"No, sir?" queried the carpenter, in a surprised tone.

"No, sir," the Commander echoed, and turned to walk away. "Oh, by the way, Mr. Armstrong," he said, pausing and returning, "I want a sideboard made."

"Yes, sir, for you cabin? I'll come and measure for it."

"I'll give you the measurements myself, and tell you exactly what I want done."

"Very good, sir," and the carpenter went away to set his crew to work. He soon ascertained that it was usually employed about the captain's private business.

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"Well, William," said the boatswain one dinner-time, in the warrant-officers' mess, "have ye put in your defects?"

"I have, John. And he says, 'Damn the defects, make me a sideboard.'"

The gunner laughed. The boatswain said, "What are you going to do, William?"

"Damn the sideboard, and make good the defects."

The boatswain laughed, not heartily like the gunner, but grimly. "You'll be luffed in for a court-martial if you're not careful, William." The boatswain was old. The carpenter, it may be repeated, was young, and relied on his absolute uprightness and the Regulations.

Commander Bills saw that his sideboard was not delayed in the making. Every day he watched its progress, and every day the carpenter fretted for his ship. The Commander pooh-poohed at his anxiety, and on the completion of the sideboard ordered half-a-dozen chairs to be made.

"What's the good of me reporting the state of the masts and yards to the officer of the watch?" said the carpenter despairingly to the boatswain, "or that the ports are not properly and securely fitted, or telling the Captain of urgent repairs needed?"

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"No good, young Bill," said the boatswain, who had become familiar.

"What am I here for, then?"

"Because the Captain couldn't help it in the first place. In the second, you're here to keep the Captain's home in repair, and I hope you're putting your heart in your work."

"I suppose he'll want me to smuggle his swag out of the yard when we get home," said the carpenter.

"He will so. But the carpenter's mate did it all right, so you'll have no difficulty."

"I'll make difficulty."

"Better not, William."

At the end of the trip the Staff-Commander did approach the carpenter on the subject of running the things ashore for him.

"I've a good mind to make a report to the Port Admiral," said the carpenter gloomily, sitting in the mess with his head on his hands, after refusing to take the things ashore.

"Don't, Bill," said the boatswain, horror-struck.

"What would you do then?"

"Work away at them chairs and tables, and take 'em ashore every time, Bill."

"Well, I won't. I won't make any on the next voyage. I'll keep my crew at its proper work."

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"Where were you brought up, William? If the ship founders it's not your fault. You'll ruin your prospects if you disobey orders."

"I stand to the Regulations."

"So will the Captain, Bill, and he also stands in with the officers who'll try you, so his footing is firmer."

"That's all very well. You can easily be philosophical. He doesn't ask you to do his dirty work."

"No. He only asks for a fathom or two of line occasionally for a skipping-rope, and he sends that home by his cox'n. But in your place, Bill, I should let the ship go. Your plain duty to yourself is to do what the Captain tells you."

"Well, I won't."

"You'll only irritate him, William, and make it uncomfortable for all of us," said the gunner. "You'd better obey your proper functions."

"Don't mind us," said the boatswain. "You look after yourself, and steer clear of court-martials, however innocent you may be."

"I'll ask for one, if necessary," said the carpenter, bitterly. "D——d mean little salt fish! Think I'm going to be chief house carpenter to him!"

"Bill," said the boatswain, "have a pipe. If you're going to get aggravated by every little devil of a

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staff-commander you come across, it's time you learnt to smoke."

On the next trip the carpenter asked the Captain point-blank whether certain articles of furniture he wished made from ship's stores were for private purposes. "Want of tact, young Bill," said the boatswain afterwards. "He was angry and simply repeated his order. Naturally. What else did you expect? I should have done the same in his place. You'll be logged if you're not careful, and the Admiralty and the country know that logs don't lie."¹

"I've protested," said the carpenter, "and I can do no more."

"Certainly not, William. You've done too much already. If he says he wants a spar for a clothes-post, make no objections. Report it as washed overboard."

"My journal will be full of lies."

"The Admiralty expect it. Only be consistent and the clerks will pass it. Don't be down-hearted. We shall have a squall up the Straits."

¹ Things were different in the eighteenth century: "I do not think that log-books, which are kept in the manner in which ships' log-books are, ought to be taken implicitly as evidence. . . . I never considered a ship's log-book to be material evidence."—*Captain Hood, 1779.*

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"If we get a gale we shall shake to pieces," said the carpenter.

"It's quite possible," said the boatswain.

* * * * *

There came a wind in the Mediterranean. It met the ship in the middle watch and nearly whipped the masts out of her. She staggered, and then ploughed forward in the rising sea. And the carpenter, rousing, put his hand from under the bed-clothes to feel whether his adze and saw were still in their place beside his bunk. He had known ships to founder in the night for want of a man with an axe or adze. He favoured an adze, because it was the tool of a skilled shipwright, and could do more in his hand than an axe.

The storm increased, and by the morning, steaming hard under close-reefed gaff-mainsail, the *Sutler* made one knot astern per hour.

The carpenter was up early and sounded the well. "Dirty little bread-barge! She's sprung a leak," said he to the boatswain as he passed aft to report.

"Joseph," said the boatswain turning to the gunner, "this'll make a good opportunity to expend your quarter's ammunition, firing minute guns. Meanwhile, it's man the pumps, I can see."

The water was pumped out quicker than it came

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in, and soon the carpenter and his men were able to search for the leak, which was found awkwardly placed under the engines. Stripping himself, the carpenter wriggled in under the engines and remained there caulking at seams, through which the water was bubbling, for some hours.

The engineer peered below then. "Getting it under, Mr. Armstrong?" said he.

"Think so," said the carpenter from out the slush and blackness.

"I should take a spell and let a caulker finish it," suggested the engineer.

"I shouldn't," said the carpenter, shortly.

"Can I do anything for you?" said the engineer.

"I should be more comfortable if less hot water and tallow dripped on me," said the carpenter, who was partly boiled.

"I'll see to that," said the engineer.

After some hours the carpenter crawled out and reported that the leak was stopped. He then asked the doctor for soothing ointments, suitable for scalds, and went to sleep.

"Very energetic, William," said the boatswain next day. "But I should have given my men a chance."

"Yes, and foundered in the next gale," said the

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carpenter. "They are cabinetmakers, my men, not caulkers."

* * * * *

Some months afterwards, when the ship was discharging cargo at Malta, the engineer heard that he (the engineer) was promoted for stopping the leak. The engineer was astonished. The carpenter interviewed the Captain. The entry in the log-book ran—"During the gale the ship sprung a leak, which was successfully stopped by the engineer, assisted by the carpenter."

The carpenter asked the Captain his reason for making the entry in that way. "The engineer," said he, "had as much to do with stopping that leak as my little boy at home, sir."

The Captain explained that the report looked better in that way.

The carpenter said it was a false report.

"You had better be careful, Mr. Armstrong," said the captain.

"I will be," said the carpenter, going forward.

And the boatswain, condoling with him afterwards said, "You shouldn't have been so hard on him over the furniture, William. Captains, even if they're only staff-commanders, are very human, and like to level up."

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"I'll send in a requisition to be superseded," said the carpenter.

"My young friend," said the boatswain, "that's committing official suicide."

"I'll detail what took place. I'll challenge that lying log."

"The log has become history, William. It is held to be true."

"It's false!"

"I know."

"Very well. Let the court-martial break me. I'll have one."

"It's a privilege I shouldn't abuse, Bill. Court-martials are always there, so to speak, if you want 'em. But I shouldn't ask for 'em. You're very, very youthful, William."

"I know I am."

"Come, that's better. Him that's young and knows that he's young is in a fair way to know other things."

"Well, I shall write out my request, and give it in when we reach Spithead."

The ship discharged her stores at Malta, and reached Spithead in safety. After she had dropped anchor the carpenter presented his request to the Captain to be endorsed and forwarded to the Admiralty.

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"What's this?" said the Captain.

"Request to be superseded, sir."

"What!"

"Request to be superseded, sir."

"Why do you want to be superseded?"

"My reasons are stated in the paper, sir."

"You will consider yourself under arrest, Mr. Armstrong. You will remain aboard until further orders."

"Very good, sir," and the carpenter went to his mess.

The Staff-Commander was frightened. He called the carpenter later in the day into his cabin and pointed out the serious consequences if his request were passed on.

The carpenter said he had considered that for some time; ever since he had heard of the false entry in the log, in fact.

The Captain glossed over the word "false," and said that speaking not as a superior officer, but as a ship-mate, as a friend, he would advise him to reconsider the position and withdraw the request. It reflected on himself personally, though for that he did not care, but he did care for the good name of the Service, where all the officers ought to work together like brothers.

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"The devil!" muttered the carpenter under his breath.

"Come now, Mr. Armstrong," said the Captain, taking the carpenter's arm in a friendly manner, and insinuating the written request into his hand. "Officially I know nothing of this. Drop it quietly overboard, and there's an end of it. Have a glass of wine with me."

The carpenter drew himself free and laid the paper upon the cabin-table. "I gave this request in according to the Regulations, sir, officially. I wish it to go forward."

"Do you know all that it entails upon you?" said the Staff-Commander, still unbeaten.

"Not all, perhaps. But I am not taking account of that, sir."

"But you ought. You should consider your wife and family."

"It is my wife and family make me determined to have that request forwarded, sir."

"I have called you in as a friend, Mr. Armstrong. It is of no consequence to me whether the request goes to the Admiralty or not. You are young——"

"So the boatswain said, sir."

"You have the rashness of youth. Just you get

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the boatswain to look over this and see what he says."

"He has already told me I am a young fool, sir."

"And rightly. Any staid man in the Service would tell you the same. You are blasting your career."

"So the gunner says, sir."

"And so any court-martial will prove to you, Armstrong," said the Captain, laying his hand quite affectionately upon the carpenter's shoulder. "I have watched you at work. I have noted the energy and ability you have displayed. I have reported upon it——"

"And the engineer thereupon gets made a chief. Yes, sir?"

"I did wrong in not giving more credit to you, Armstrong. But you must admit the engineer was there. It is not always the man who puts his hand to a job who is the best man——"

"No, sir. It's sometimes the man who says, 'How are you getting on?'"

"The engineer was the senior officer present, Armstrong. It is not necessary that a captain should fire the actual guns of his ship in order to

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fight that ship. Yet the credit is his, and rightly so."

"I found the leak. I stopped the leak. It was my duty. That is nothing. But if you make it something great enough for an engineer to be promoted over it, an engineer who did not lift a little finger towards stopping it; who could not have stopped it; then I complain. Then I put in a request to be superseded. There is my request, sir."

"I am sorry you feel it so much, Armstrong. But further opportunities for distinction will occur. Why, damme," and the Staff-Commander smiled as pleasantly as he was able, "damme, I'll have a collision one night so as to give you a fair chance."

The carpenter said nothing, and made no movement towards taking up his request.

The Staff-Commander's smile froze. "Well?" he queried.

"I have nothing more to say, sir," said the carpenter.

"That will do then; good-evening."

"Good-evening, sir." And the carpenter turned to go.

"You've forgotten the request, Mr. Armstrong," said the Captain.

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"No, sir. There it is," said the carpenter.

"But we mustn't leave it there."

"I have left it with you, sir. Thank you for your friendly advice. I cannot take it."

"Very good, Mr. Armstrong. You can go."

* * * * *

It was decided by the court-martial that the reasons given by Mr. Armstrong as to why he should be superseded were insufficient, but inasmuch as he appeared to have behaved habitually in an insubordinate manner, he was sentenced to be dismissed his ship and to lose a year's seniority. The court altogether ignored the question of the Staff-Commander's furniture, touched upon in the carpenter's memorandum.

Thus discipline was maintained and the authority of captains upheld. But—it was noted that Staff-Commander Bills, after finishing his commission on the *Sutler*, was employed no more. And a certain energetic post-captain took that disgraced carpenter into his ship, and finding him able and energetic, pushed him on, so that he is to be found now-a-days with a gold ring upon his sleeve after all.

The boatswain was right, and the carpenter was right. But the boatswain says, in his old age, that

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the case is peculiar, and the moral is to remain unaltered. "There is no rule," says the gunner, "that is not an exception." The boatswain knows something is wrong with that, but can't for the life of him see what; but he says there's no doubt Armstrong is an exception, and his case must not be taken as a rule, whatever the gunner may say.

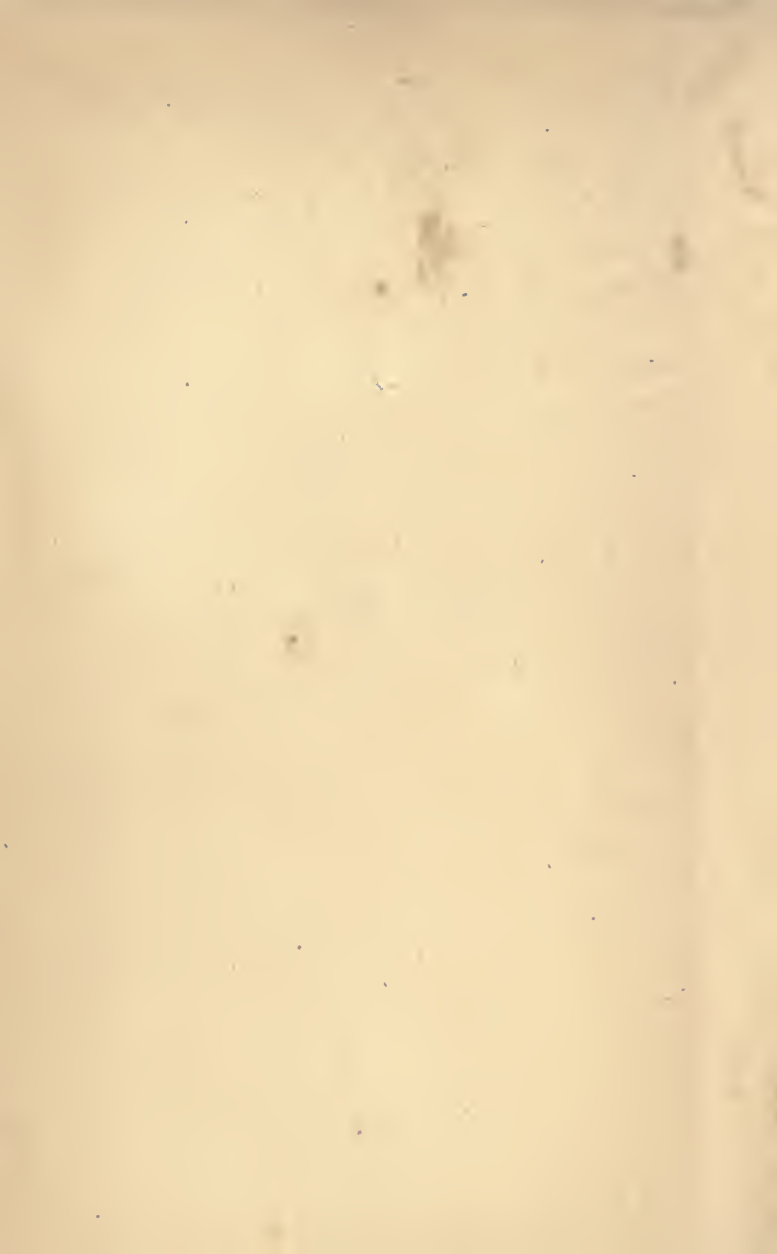
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